**Video Transcript**

**Julia Gillard addresses the Advancing Women’s Leadership Summit 2022**

*MC*

It is my pleasure, and please join with me, in welcoming the Honourable Julia Gillard, 27th Prime Minister of Australia, an inspiring woman in leadership.

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Can I start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, and in a spirit of reconciliation, pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging?

Thank you for that very generous introduction, and I’m looking forward to the conversation to come.

Can I also acknowledge the Minister we’ve just heard from, Melissa?

Melissa and I have worked together over, well quite a few years when you think about it, maybe we don’t want to think about all of them, and it’s terrific to see the role in leadership she’s now playing in this great state of Victoria.

And to Kat and Juliana, thank you for everything you’re doing, all of the extra effort you’re putting in, to create events like this and the networks and the energy that come out of them, thank you so much.

My role today is to sort of open up the conversation.

Unfortunately, I’m not able to stay with you for all of the day, I’m actually flying to London today, so I’m in that frantic zone where you know that there’s 20 more things you need to do before you get on the plane, but that’s not the problem.

The problem is the 30 of them that you’ve forgotten, and when you get in that plane seat you’ll be like, oh no, and there’ll be nothing I can do about it for sort of 20-something hours before I land in London, so excuse me if you see me run out just after 10:30.

But, I did want to take this opportunity to talk to you about barriers for gender equality, with a particular focus on local government.

And of course, local government is such an incredibly important part of how we bring our democracy together, and ensure that we are representing the needs of communities.

My predecessor in the seat of Lawler in Melbourne’s West was the great Australian Barry Jones.

He served in the State Parliament before he went into the Federal Parliament, and after he retired from Federal Parliament he would often go around saying the thing I haven’t done is served in local government and maybe I’ve missed the best bit.

So take that with you that you are in the best bit.

But what are the barriers for women coming forward to lead in the best bit?

Well let’s really take the big, big frame here and ask ourselves are there inherent differences between men and women that speak into the pathways that men and women take in their lifetimes?

And my answer to that is no.

There was a fashionable, a few years ago, an analysis that men are from Mars, women are from Venus, our brains work incredibly differently, and that explained so much of our world and the positioning of men and women in it.

We’ve had, since that era, great researchers, including a woman called Cordelia Fine at the University of Melbourne, unpack all of that, talk about our brains, look at our brains, and she concludes that most of this analysis is neurosexism not neuroscience.

What does happen though, is from the earliest days girls and boys, men and women are socialised differently.

Indeed that gender treatment can start now, even before a child is born, with people knowing the gender of the child they’re about to have, gender reveal parties and all of that, and already there are gendered things, a gender treatment starting.

And that socialisation is so around us that we’re not even truly conscious of it.

Hilary Clinton is from – telling a story, she talks about two young fish who are swimming in a stream and they pass an older fish who is going in the other direction, and the older fish says to the two young fish, the water is mighty fine today.

And one of the young fish turns to the other and says what’s water?

Because if you’ve never been out of water why would you even think about the water, it is just the world around you, and a gendered world is the world around us.

And it sends messages to women in all sorts of ways that aspiring for leadership being ambitious about leadership, putting themselves forward to represent their community, is not a pathway for them.

It starts with the lack of role models.

You imagine your future largely around seeing other people do things and then you know you can do them too.

I mean to take a very obvious example, lots of young girls would think, you know, when I grow up I’d like to be a mother, and they’ve already got a very clear image of what motherhood is because they’ve seen their own mother, many other mothers in their friendship circle, they know what that is.

They think they can do it because they see it.

If you don’t routinely see images of women’s leadership then you are less likely to imagine yourself in that pathway, to imagine yourself in that space.

And historically we have lacked role models for women’s leadership, and whilst now we can point to women federally, in the state government, in local government, the reality is they are not appearing in front of people in equal numbers.

The Global Institute for Women’s Leadership did some analysis in the early months of COVID to see who was being quoted in traditional media on COVID.

Who were the experts that people were going to?

And we found that disproportionately the voices on COVID were male voices, so that’s just one example of how gendered our world is.

Indeed, it wasn’t until you got to the topic of domestic violence that you saw more women’s faces and heard more women’s voices on COVID.

The science, the economic impact, the social policy impact other than domestic violence you were seeing male voices and male faces.

So obviously it’s less, it’s less capacity for women to think themselves into those very front roles.

Second, women I think intuitively know that if they step forward with ambition that will be an adverse reaction, and we’ve got very deep psychological studies now, a very deep psychological evidence-base that tells us that we, because of the sexist whispers in the back of all of our brains because how we’ve been socialised, we see a man who is ambitious, self-seeking, wanting a position for himself and we say wow, he’s a go-getter, he’s going to end up going places.

If we see a woman exhibiting the same behaviours we are very likely to say she’s pretty hard-bitten, pretty hard-boiled, I bet she’s a bit of a, and I’ll let you supply the word that lies at the end of that sentence, but if we were all being honest with each other we’ve either said or we’ve heard that expression a lot.

And that is the sexist stereotypes that women should be empathetic, nurturing, caring, put the needs of others before the needs of self, an assertive woman going for leaderships jars against those stereotypes, and because she jars against them we quickly conclude that she is probably quite unlikeable.

And women know that I think, they don’t necessarily need to know all of the psychological studies, you know it intuitively that if you step forward and step forward very, very strongly that you are likely to get that reaction, and so women self-limit.

Now when we’ve seen women self-limit a lot of the analysis has then gone well this is a women’s confidence problem, you know, the problem here is that women doubt themselves and they don’t put themselves forward.

And yet when we look at the research it’s actually more the reception that women know they’re going to get than any internal characteristics about confidence that is driving these kind of outcomes.

There was a great psychological study in a science business, so a business that would routinely bring its top scientists together to talk about the hardest problems, and when they did that time after time, what they notices was that women scientists were speaking less in those meetings and so they thought to themselves, aha, this is a confidence problem, women are less confident than men.

But when they dug a little deeper what they actually found was if a man put forward an answer, you know, his suggested answer to the scientific problem they were trying to solve, and it was a little bit right and a little bit wrong, the group would work to build on the bit that was a little bit right and they would discard the bit that was a little bit wrong.

If a woman put forward an idea that was a bit right and bit wrong it would be dismissed.

And so the signal the group was sending to her is unless you are a million percent sure your idea is absolutely right, don’t put it into the ideas pool because you will face a rejection.

And so a lot of what has happened to date, which has been about fixing women, trying to make women more confident, more assertive, and I’m sure many of you are aware of programs like that, I think has been misconceived.

Now that doesn’t mean that we can – we don’t find joy and solidarity in going to things with other women, in being in circles with other women and enjoying mentorship and sponsorship with other women we do, but ultimately we’re not going to get change by just doing confidence training for women.

Instead we’ve got to shine a light on these sort of stereotypes that are holding women back, and we’ve got to do the practical work, the fixing structures, which exclude women.

Now what do I mean by that?

Well, to put yourself forward for election at any level, whether it be local government, state or federal level, you need to have a set of things in your world.

You need to have an ability to network in a way which means that you’ll get sources of support.

You need to be able to fundraise, putting yourself as a candidate requires fundraising.

You need to be out and about in all of the community meetings where people gather, getting your face known, explaining your policies, putting the cases to why people should vote for you.

And when we look at all of those things we find that women have disproportionately not have the same access to those networks of support, to fundraising dollars, and to the time to get themselves out there, because those structures have historically been male structures, and for women who a particularly trying to balance work and family life where domestic labour is still so gendered and women disproportionately step up to domestic labour and to the care of children and others in the family, getting the time, getting the support to do that can be incredibly difficult, and so we need also to be reworking those structures.

When we look at the federal political level and the state political level, and obviously my familiarity is with the Australian Labor Party, we many years ago, as long ago as when Joan Kirner ceased leading this great state and decided to devote her energies to a journey of change for women in the Labor Party, we were very focused on fixing these structural impediments.

That’s why we adopted an affirmative action target which drove a set of behaviours about looking for women candidates and putting them in seats, including in seats that they could win, rather than putting women in the marginal seats, and we also shone a light on the structural problems.

And alongside the affirmative action target there were organisations created like Emily’s List and the Labor Women’s Network, and Emily’s List in particular would do differential fundraising and better support women candidates knowing that they might need the kind of supports that men didn’t, for example they might need support with their childcare costs for example.

They might need support with accessing a wardrobe of clothes that were appropriate to be out there as a candidate because we know women get differentially judged on appearance.

I spend a lot of my time now in the UK and let me tell you, having been through the era of Prime Minister Johnson as Prime Minister, there is no doubt that women get judged differentially on appearance.

I can’t imagine that woman with a mop of hair that had never seen a comb or a brush, and a sort of a shirt coming untucked and a suit that had been dribbled on, I don’t a woman who looked like that would have come through to be Prime Minister of the UK or Prime Minister of anywhere else.

And the fact Liz Truss, the incoming Prime Minister is immaculately presented, is telling you that she knows, and we all know that she will be judged more on appearance than a male candidate would, and so Emily’s List, doing that very practical kind of support.

Now circling through to local government, what does this mean for you and why have we seen perhaps less progress in some ways at the local level than we’ve seen at other levels?

Well, I think there’s a series of things going on and it would be really good to focus on them today.

One, federally, state these are big things, you know, big institutions, you know, one parliament at the peak of it whereas local government is everywhere in smaller units and so to make change you’ve got to make change in far more places, it’s not simply going okay, federal parliament let’s change it, state parliament let’s change it, it’s every council chamber, it’s every council office right around Victoria, indeed right around the country.

So there’s more fragmentation, now that makes the journey of change potentially more difficult, but it also means that there’s the ability to learn from each other, to pilot, to trial, to identify best practice to see what’s working and to share it, and quintessentially that’s today gives us all an opportunity to do.

I actually think, and this will be a curious sentence in some way, the lack of huge engagement by political parties in local government also adds to this fragmentation.

Now I’m not by that sentence meaning to suggest that the strategy for change is to have political parties at the local level in the way we historically have had them at the state level and the federal level.

But political parties can be vehicles for change, Labor has done that profoundly at the state and the federal level, and we don’t just have one of those big levers available to us in local government.

So I do think that means that what brings change will be much more customised, much more localised, and we need more thought and exchange to deliver it.

And I know that you are all incredibly focused on that and you’re bringing your energy and ideas to that today, but if we can resolve it and I believe we can, then the benefits will be huge.

The research is incredibly clear now that the more diverse a team is, whether it’s a corporate C suite, a corporate board, a cabinet in state government or federal government or a local council, the more diverse a team is the stronger its decision-making.

And so the more diversity in every sense we can bring to who is sitting in council chambers around Victoria, the more we can do that the stronger local government will get.

And I think that in addition to that practical benefit there is a moral dimension here which is we need to have local democracies that are truly drawing on the skills and talents of every member in that local community, and every member of that local community should be able to look at their local government and say I know that’s a place for me because someone like me, someone who shares my life experience, someone who looks like me is involved in my local democracy, so that moral dimension is also one which should propel us with energy through the discussions today.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you and I look forward to the discussion to come.

Thank you.I’m so interested in the research and the stats, and as I was preparing for today I had colleagues in different parts of the world saying to me do we still need to do this, do we still need to do, do we still need to have the conversation?

So I went back to some of the stats myself and I thought it was worth just anchoring ourselves back to them.

You’ve shared some of them, the Honourable Horne shared some of them.

These are in some of your books that Ngozi and you wrote together, “everywhere from the boardroom to the sports field women are disproportionately underrepresented” and I thought I would share some of that just to ground us back into why we’re here.

Not only in democracy or politics but Nobel Prize recipients, there are about only 6% or less of them are women.

Nobel Laureates for literature a bit better at 15% women.

I think Minister Horne spoke to companies before, but generally of the FTSE and the Fortune 500 it’s about 6% women CEOs.

Twenty four percent of people we hear and see on the news are, you know, we are disproportionately worse, it’s like it’s about 4% some of them are people who are of women background.

And then we go into box office movies.

Box office movies there’s only about 31% of the roles are female speaking characters.

And sport, let me ask you, of the top 100 most highly paid athletes how many of them are women?

One.

Who is it?

Serena Williams.

What number does she come in at?

Sixty three.

So there’s work to be done isn’t there?

There’s still work to be done.

So I wanted to sort of unpack that and your experiences in being in that space before we go to some question from the crowd.

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Sure.

Well thank you for bringing those statistics into it and just one more.

The World Economic Forum each year does a deep dive on gender equality and it publishes country by country but also globally how long until we reach gender equality in the economy, in politics, in health and in education.

And their most recent study has put that at more than 130 years and it actually went – increased by around 20 years because of the differential impacts of COVID upon women.

And Australia in those rankings has been just going down and down and down and down, and we are being absolutely flogged by New Zealand which is not something that we normally are happy with.

We’re certainly not happy when it happens on the sporting field so we should be viewing some of the things that are happening there and thinking about them for here.

It does frustrate me when people say, you know, surely we’ve fixed this, why are we still talking about it?

And I think that this juncture happens because we have been at this task of gender equality for a long time.

We’ve made a fair bit of progress and we should never underestimate how much progress we’ve made, but people mistake the activity that they see for outcomes, and they think well if all of these things are happening then it must be fixed or very close to fixed.

Whereas the statistics tell us we’ve still got quite a long way to go, and there are differential indications in our world about whether we’re just taking steps forward or we’re taking some steps forward and some steps back.

I certainly think the hyperpolarisation of politics in many parts of the world, I’m thinking particularly of the US here, have taken women back, certainly taken women’s reproductive rights back in the US, and I think social media has helped us take some steps forward.

We wouldn’t have had me too without social media, but it is also an instrument that can take women back.

We know of the abuse that is directed at political candidates, it is disproportionately directed at women, it is disproportionately directed at women of colour, and I think all of us can be just astonished at how quickly an online conversation can go from you’re wrong about that to, you know, death threats, rape threats and the use of completely gendered and unacceptable terminology.

It’s like two or three turns of the exchange and somehow we’re there.

So I think we’ve got to keep informing people of the true benchmarks of progress and really bearing down on the strategies for change from here.

And one of the reasons I was so enthused about founding the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership both in London and now the institute that we have at the Australian National University in Canberra, is we’re going to make that journey the quicker – as quick as it can be if we’ve got the deepest evidence-base about what works.

*MC*

All right.

We have lots of great questions to ask you about.

One of the things that came up when I was reading Women in Leadership, your book, and I think Jacinda Ardern spoke to this about holding true to your essential stuff in politics.

I’m interested in what things have helped you do this while in office, where do you draw the line and hold true to yourself?

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Yeah.

I think in some ways that’s easier than people from outside politics think.

I often have people say to me oh, you know, what’s it like when you really believe X but your political party is doing Y and you have to do Y because of solidarity with your political party?

And in reality I didn’t face those moments.

You know, if you deeply believe in the value system of the political party that you choose to join and choose to be an activist for, then those moments really don’t come either at all, or if they do come they don’t come very frequently.

And I’m a big believer, and I think it’s central to the Labor Party ethos, that there’s power and wisdom in the team, and so on some occasions where my initial impression was, you know, maybe we should do this, then you listen to the discussion, you listen to the debate, you listen to colleagues you respect, and you do come around to the sort of consensus view because it is a better view, so I never felt that disjuncture.

And, then I think – I do get a little bit anxious about this, sort of, you know, terminology around authenticity which is sort of with us everywhere today, you know, you need to be true to your authentic self, because I think it underestimates how much all of us are shaped by the environment we work in and the environment we grew up in.

So it’s not that you’re looking deep inside yourself and saying aha, my true authentic self is X but I’m doing Y, it’s that year after year after year you’re in an environment, you shape it, it shapes you, and then your sense of who you are becomes fused with the environment that you work in.

I think knowing that it then takes you to looking at the environment and saying how did it shape me and what could be different for other women?

And I think certainly one of the things that shaped me, is I went into parliament knowing that it was an incredibly adversarial place, and I wanted to show that a woman could come to dominate that environment, you know, the question time, bear pit kind of environment, that a woman could thrive and dominate in that environment, so I shaped it, it shaped me.

The thing with Jacinda, I think which is so interesting, because she’s the third woman to lead her country, she isn’t just automatically accepting that you go to the political environment and you try and show a woman can thrive in it.

She now feels more licenced because the other women have done that, Jenny Shipley and Helen Clark, she now feels more licenced to say can we reshape this environment and that’s what she’s tried to do by putting kindness at the forefront of how she engages with her leadership.

So I think the more generations of women we have, you know, the more impact women will have on shaping the environment and the environment will therefore shape them differently.

*MC*

Yeah, so that very evolution of that sense of self.

So, thinking about support, like support’s an important piece, you spoke about it in your keynote in order to help women stand, stay and step up into senior roles.

I’m wondering what you think are the most important support structures to put in place to assist women in standing, staying and stepping up in those roles.

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Yeah.

I mean certainly your family, your nearest and dearest are, you know, the most incredible support structures you can have.

For me it was absolutely vital to have people in my life who had known me for decades before I was in politics, decades before people were kind of dancing around me because I was the Prime Minister, and obviously when you walk into the room as Prime Minister it kind of invites a set of behaviours because people are kind of ooh the Prime Minister’s here, to have people who were just knowing you forever, haven’t succumbed to any of that, and are just dealing with you as you, so those support structures.

I think thinking about mentoring and sponsorship, and we go to this in the book as support structures is important.

I didn’t do that so much, I think women do that much more now, the dialogue around mentorship and sponsorship is much more mature than it was when I was starting out.

And I think we’ve got a better understanding of the difference between the two.

I mentor can be someone who’s a sort of confidant, a coach, someone that you can go and take the problems to, you can be in a very safe space.

A sponsor is someone who may do all of those things but also has the power to help you shape your career pathway and is prepared to use their power for you, which is a big investment by them, being thoughtful about that.

I also think, and this is one of the big messages of the Women in Leadership Board, to draw around you other people, women and men, but likely to be more women than men, who understand the gender barriers that you are likely to face and war-gaming through how you will deal with those barriers when you get to them.

I always kind of joke with young women now that the great advantage that they have is that they’ve seen this movie before, they don’t have to, you know, guess what the plotline’s going to be, they’ve seen this movie before, and because they’ve seen this movie before and they’ve seen how women have been belittled, excluded, judged on appearance, judged on family structures, underestimated, judged as overly aggressive or overly ambitious, because they’ve seen this movie before they can wargame in advance with a set of friends and confidants how they will react in that moment.

So instead of making it up in the instant that something happens to you you can be pre-prepared.

*MC*

Terrific.

You mentioned when you were talking up at the lectern before about the bear pit and, you know, kind of being in that, what is potentially quite a punishing arena that’s politics.

I’m wondering about kind of how you can travel that journey of the punishment in that arena, how does it make it easy to stay in that space, to work in that culture, to kind of travel the ups and downs of the bear pit so to speak?

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Yeah.

I mean I – you know, the behaviours in parliament, I mean, you know, Melissa and all of the representatives here today know this, the behaviours in parliament are kind of pretty unique.

I mean I have women come up and talk to me about the misogyny speech and how they wished they’d say X or Y when a sexist moment happened to them, and I’m always very careful to say well, you know, if you’re up kind of yelling about stuff on a bus, a train, in your workplace, may not go quite so well, so you know, the behaviours in question time kind of don’t necessarily travel.

I think because the institution has been so much formed around that, and that has got strength as well as problems.

I mean it’s problem is that it’s very alienating for a lot of people, men and women, but I think disproportionately women, and a lot of people who look at our parliament think, you know, obviously nothing gets done there, they’re obviously all just yelling at each other every day, not realising that question time is a very stylised part of the day and for the rest of the day people can very amicably working their way through legislation which is largely bipartisan.

Or they can be sitting on a committee together and really getting some big things done with not one raised voice or one nasty insult, people don’t tend to see that.

So it is alienating but, you know, because our democracy is where values contend you should expect that debate to robust.

And I think we need robust debate around those values and how they contend, and in some ways we need to let a bit of steam off around that because it’s part of how we work our way to the new solution the new pathway.

I mean for me personally, I always understood that the question time stuff in particular is almost, you know, it’s a particular form of political theatre, and you’re in a persona and you’re in a moment when you’re doing that, and you can walk out and thirty seconds later be, you know, happily laughing and joking and, you know, treating people normally, that you could switch it on and switch it off.

And I think I was always able to do that, I didn’t have to think about how to do that.

I think some others probably have found those transitions harder, that it’s taken longer to come down from the adrenalin of it.

But I honestly got to a stage where I could literally feel my adrenalin kick as I walked into question time, like I could feel the kick and feel the kick in my body.

And I could feel as I walked back, the adrenalin draining away, it was like, you know, you turn on for a stage performance or something that you turn off afterwards.

And so then you could do all of the normal things for sort of rest and respite, you know, time with friends, time with family, the best of your colleagues, the best of your staff, trying to get some sleep, trying to get some basic exercise, you know, eat as well as you could, just those things that help you stay healthy and do what you need to do day after day.

*MC*

Great.

Now one of the themes, and you mentioned a little bit of it, one of the themes that you and Ngozi wrote about in your book was about ambition and owning that ambition.

And I think it was Hilary Clinton made this reference, and more importantly it’s about the lack of ownership of ambition by women and how open ambition of women is viewed negatively, and you’ve mentioned that before.

What do you think could help women own their ambition more, and feel comfortable sharing it?

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

I think either we’ve got to get to a stage where we accept everybody owning ambition, or we’ve got to get to a stage where we view ambition differently.

And so just to take you to one study around this that we refer to in the book, there was an American university that set up and experiment, so they had two audiences, you know, randomised group of voters, they were actual voters, and they had a man go into one audience and pitch you should vote for me because, and they had a woman go into one audience and pitch you should vote for me because, and the experiment was that they were actors and they’d been given exactly the same script so they delivered exactly the same lines.

And the lines included things like, you know, I always get the job done, I might need to stand on people’s toes to deliver but I always do.

And a line like that coming from the man, like he’s going to achieve he’s going to get a lot of bunting, tick, tick, I’m going to vote for him.

And a line like that coming from the woman they’re like, mmm, and she scored far fewer votes.

So I think we’ve got to be very clear are we aiming here to say those kind of lines, you know, or the Beto O’Rourke, ultimately it was acknowledged as a gap, but when he was in contention to run for the presidency he used the line, ‘man I was born for it’, you know, born to be president.

And, you know, are we saying we think those lines should equally lie in everybody’s mouths and we would be happy to hear them, or are we trying to do a little bit more and potentially say we’re only going to judge people well if their ambition is not only sided in context for self but in the context of others.

So we want everybody who’s looking for our support, looking for a promotion, looking for the next opportunity to say yes, I’m ambitious to get on but I really want to do it because when I’m there it would be incredibly meaningful for me to use that power too and then insert whatever collective goal is appropriate for the position that’s under contention.

So everybody expressing ambition as in the service of others rather than being about themselves, and I think that’s where we want to try and get to.

*MC*

Yeah, it’s a different look at it isn’t it?

I like that it’s taking it away from we need to play this game, we’re in this arena, to how do we express goals and, yeah, I like that.

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Yeah, it gets you to the why in a different way, why do you want to do it?

Is it because you want to puff your chest out and say so I’m now X, or is the Y about something deeper?

*MC*

Lovely.

Now, it’s nearly ten years since the misogyny speech.

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Yes.

*MC*

Wow!

Ten years has gone by and I can’t wait for the book to come out, I think it’s next month.

So, what do you think has changed for women in leadership since then?

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Well, one, I’m ten years older and obviously the ten years is really in my mind now.

But before we were on the ten years, you know, I’d have young women come up to me, they’re fully functioning adults out in the world with jobs and they’d say something like, oh, I was in second year high school when you gave the misogyny speech.

Why aren’t your parents with you, why aren’t you still in the school uniform?

And then you’d go, oh because it’s that long ago that’s what’s happened here.

So yes ten years, what I think has changed, I do think some things have changed.

I mean I think, you know, very separately to the misogyny speech I think some big things have changed in our world, me too is certainly one of them, but I think the misogyny speech is one thread in a very broad set of changes that have unleased the conversation about sexism and misogyny.

And so, you know, when I was Prime Minister the sort of fashionable analysis was yes, it was noteworthy, I was the first woman but not one thing that happened to me, not one aspect of my treatment was in any way explained by gender, gender was just irrelevant to it.

And I feel like eyes are now open and people see the treatment of women in the public arena and they say that’s gender and they’re prepared to go out and call it out.

And this really struck me, the difference I thought between the reaction to Hilary Clinton in the 2016 campaign where I thought a lot of gender things happened, including her being positioned as cold, calculating and vicious, nasty, with many of those threads just layered on because of gender, versus the 2020 campaign where when Kamala Harris was first announced as Vice President, you know, Donald Trump did the, ‘no-one likes her, she’s so nasty’, and people just flooded into the media saying that’s just sexism 101 and you’re only putting the nasty label on her because that’s the label that’s supplied to powerful women.

So I know in some ways it sounds like a humble thing to say, well what’s changed is the conversion, but really human beings only end up fixing things if we can name them, categorise them, talk about them, think about them because they’ve got names on them, and then get to the solutions and I think that’s the process we’re in now.

*MC*

Now, to choose your own adventure at the end of this interview, what’s one question you have wanted to be asked about women in leadership that you’ve never been asked?

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Oh, that’s a very good question, and I’d say one thing that I, you know, I would like to be asked ‘cause I sort of see it everywhere, is how we find the solidarity we need in our language and our activities for women globally.

And I think this has got all sorts of dimensions, I mean Ngozi and I interviewed women from very different cultures and contexts, from Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, first women to lead a nation in Africa, Liberia a country of poverty and civil war, through to Erna Solberg in Norway, you know, one of the richest and most gender-equal places on earth, and you’d say to yourself just from the outside, there can be nothing in common here, the culture and the context is too different, and yet the manifestations of sexism both of them had experienced had many things in common.

So I think the global feminist struggle is truly that, but we don’t go as deep as we should on cultures and contexts and what we can do living in a great country like Australia or a wonderful state like Victoria, what we can do to reach out to those women who are really facing the hardest aspects of gender inequality, and do that in a way that doesn’t position what we’re doing here as somehow self-centred or flimflam because I think there’s a lot of backlash now against middle class women moaning, you know, that sort of theme that you see in the media, that sort of well, you know, if you’re still complaining about stuff what about a girl growing up in South Sudan, and it’s kind of yes, of course, we’ve got to be doing everything we can to change life chances for that girl.

But other sections of the community when they raise complaints don’t get told your complaint just should be brushed aside because somewhere in the world something worse is happening.

I don’t think men who raise the issues get told, oh get over yourself, you know, there’s a bloke in Nigeria who’s living a much worse life than you.

People just deal with the issue and so we’ve got to find that network of connections and, as we continue to do what we need to do.

*MC*

Thank you.

Now we’re going to get some questions from the crowd.

We did get some questions before today and they were liked by lots of people, and so I’m taking the first few that I can get to in the time we’ve got, and I think Kaz Maclean, where are you, there you are you’re first up.

We’ll get you a microphone over to you Kaz, just hold it.

*Caz McLean*

Thank you so much.

Look this definitely builds on the bear pit conversation.

Within the local government sector we’re talking a lot about civility and standards of common courtesy that are often forgotten or ignored in the chamber, and this is always just, or often justified, within the context of political debate.

How can we re-establish agreed standards of civility that support inclusion and psychological safety?

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

I think that is a great question, and I know because of things that have been happening it’s very present on people’s minds.

The size that local government is, you know, the number of people in the room, I think the dynamics of the room are very different, and mimicking behaviours that would be in federal or state parliamentary question times is inappropriate.

I mean we don’t – we might all go to the football and conduct ourselves a particular way, you don’t go into the office and conduct yourself that way yelling and cheering and all of that kind of stuff, people would view that pretty eccentrically.

And really the smaller the group I think the harder uncivil behaviour insults land and the more mindful we’ve got to be of inclusion.

I would have reacted, so I’m very use to taking insults across the dispatch box from the opposition, but if I’d been sitting in a room of 20 or 30 and someone had said something like that I think everyone in that room would have gone oh my God that is just so inappropriate, why is this happening, and the atmosphere in the room would have been profoundly changed by it.

So I think the smaller settings of local government mean you can actually be sort of showing how it’s best done when it’s done with more courtesy and more respect.

And even in that robust area of question time, you know, the things that actually landed the hardest and had the most political impact were not the stupid jibes, they were the things that had analytical force behind them.

So they might have been aggressively put but still had analytical force behind them, and so if you really want to change a debate that analytical force matters.

*MC*

Thanks Kaz.

We might head over to Ruth, I think she’s right behind you.

Ruth McGowan over to you.

*Ruth McGowan*

Thank you Miss Gillard.

This is the world’s best microphone.

In your book you mentioned this, but I’m wondering how we could practically call on more male leaders, especially ones that are leaders in the communities, to stand up and do some of that heavy lifting of calling out gender abuse and stereotypes and all the other stuff women leaders get?

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Yeah.

That’s a great question, and we need men.

You know, a gender equal world will be better for everyone so everybody should be involved in creating a gender equal world, and men have got a particular role to play here.

In defence of men I’m not sure that we have always been as clear as we should about how we want them to walk alongside us in this, not in front of us, not telling us what to do, but alongside us in this.

I think there’s been various eras of women’s engagement where the message has been, you know, this is our work and we’re getting on with it.

I think the message we’re trying to send now is we do need you to walk alongside us, we do need you to use your power for change.

And the great news for men here, and it’s kind of a bit galling, but the great news for men here and the research shows it, is if a woman points to a sexist practice there will be a voice in people’s heads that say she’s pointing that out because it’s in her interests, there’s a bit of a conflict of interests, this is kind of good for her.

Whereas if a man points out sexist behaviour people will just go there’s no conflict of interest there, this isn’t necessarily personally good for him, he’s just doing it because he’s genuinely seeing it and he’s calling it.

And so when men articulate, you know, point out unacceptable behaviours that’s actually received with more force than if women do it.

Now that is galling I think but it does mean that men have got a very special place in this discussion.

*MC*

Terrific.

Thank you Ruth.

And we’ll go to Seema, Seema Abdullah from Shepparton.

Thanks Seema.

*Seema Abdullah*

Thank you, hello.

I just want to ask can you please share with us your three survival tips in this gender inequal world, politics and parliament?

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Well, first I think you’ve got to be very, very clear on the why, the purpose of doing it.

And you know, I think most people who go into politics are pretty clear about the why, but it actually pays to get out a sheet of paper, write it down, the clarity that comes with moving something that’s sort of swirling in your mind into words on a sheet of paper, why are you doing this?

And then keep that sheet of paper with you and get it out on the tough days and re-steady yourself around your sense of purpose.

I mean part of the great intrigue of politics, part of its frustrations is that all sorts of random stuff happens, you know, there’s just a rollercoaster, it can sweep you one way or another, and so to steady yourself on what you came to do I think is really important.

Number two, I’d say it’s quite important to think about your own sense of self, you know, this public and private persona, and to work out how much of the criticism you’re going to let in.

So if a good colleague has a tough conversation with you and says and you’re doing this well or you’re doing this badly, you should take that criticism on board, we all need that constructive criticism.

If some idiots on Twitter saying oh you looked fat in that outfit, well just do not let things like that get in your head, and be sort of clear in advance where that line is.

And then I think for all of us, you know, the time, and I can’t claim I get this anywhere near right, but the time-management stuff is very important, still carving out enough time to sort of be able to deeply think, reassess strategy, decompress, you know, have some time to yourself, those moments really matter.

And if you’re just looking at your diary and thinking if there’s not an entry covering up the white space then you’re not busy enough, don’t do that, actually go to the extent of even diarising the time that you want to be in retreat, or the time that you want to be strategically thinking so you don’t end up doing that at 5:00 in the morning or 11:00 at night or you know, on Saturday when you really wanted to be with family and friends.

*MC*

Good question.

Thank you Simar.

We’re going to head to online now, we’ve got Anne Moore from Macedon Ranges Shire.

Anne are you there?

What I might do, ‘cause that’s taking a little bit of time, I do know that Sarah Race from Mornington Peninsular Shire, you here Sarah?

*Sarah Race*

Yeah.

*MC*

Yeah, great.

We might go to you while we’re trying to get Anne up, sorry online team, we’ll get to it.

Sarah, over to you.

*Sarah Race*

Thank you.

Julia, lovely to see you today.

How do you see women leaders reshaping the nature of political discourse?

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

I think it depends how much women want to do it.

I don’t think we should assume women are going to do it.

It kind of comes back to this ambition question, and I look at what Jacinda Ardern for example is trying to do, and the research shows this very clearly, we give permission to men to lead if they come across as strong, we only give permission to women to lead if they come across as strong and empathetic.

And I think we’ve got to equalise that, either we say we want empathy in leaders, in which case we want it in all leaders, or we say empathy is not a desirable characteristic, what we want to focus on is strength and we fairly evaluate all leaders against that criteria, but we don’t do the differential.

And I think that also holds true for the reshaping of discourse.

I think there are some pretty deep questions now about how we need to strengthen democracies and I freely admit I’m kind of old school, I am the old school, but there’s a newer set of things happening now where the community is clearly saying to us, all of us, the way you used to politics in the past that day is gone, we’re looking to new ways of engagement, we want you to take the community more seriously, we want to see less conflict more consensus.

We want to see more action, we want to see more localisation and we want to see more fairness and gender equality, and you know, I think reflecting back on the May campaign here in Australia, the Australian election, there were all of those themes and particularly a gender equality theme in the discourse.

So that does mean, I think, that it has to be on everybody’s shoulders about how we’re going to reshape our democracy in a way that’s more inclusive and more purpose-fit for the era that we’re going into now.

Now that doesn’t mean that women won’t have, you know, their own voices in that in the sense that, you know, because we have been socialised to be more team oriented, more nurturing, more empathetic, we’ll bring that to the table, and I think we’ll also bring to the table a set of very practical considerations about how everybody gets into this world which has modified a bit but historically was a world fit for men’s lives and men’s careers not women’s lives and women’s careers.

*MC*

All right.

I think we’ve got one more.

We’re going to try going to Anne, if Anne doesn’t come through I’ll read it out for her.

Okay.

*Anne Race*

Hi, can you hear me now?

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Yes.

Welcome Anne.

*Anne Race*

And you, hi, good morning Julia it’s lovely to see you again and greetings from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung country in the beautiful Macedon Ranges.

So my question is when do you feel that wage equality will actually become a reality for women in Australia?

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Wouldn’t it be nice if I could just say, you know, the 13th day of March 2024, we’ll definitely have that fixed by then, but no I can’t do that.

I do think that there’s some good change strategies that people know make a difference and generate better employment opportunities, employment outcomes, gender pay equality, and I know the federal government and the government here in Victoria has been, you know the new federal government particularly is very focused on this, and we did, when I was in government, make a difference to the industrial laws around better value in what has historically been women’s work, and that did lead to a major re-evaluation of pay rates in the social and community sector, but we need far more of that to happen if we’re going to get to a stage where workers are treated absolutely fairly and not on the basis of historic images of labour where women’s caring work has been undervalued and underestimated because it’s been dismissed as women’s work.

*MC*

Okay.

Thank you have a very big Anne with her thumbs up, thank you Anne.

Our time has come to an end.

It’s been an absolute pleasure to sit on the couch so to speak with you and have a conversation.

I’m going to take away a new definition of ambition, I’m loving that, and also the ability to speak for 20 minutes without notes, that’s a new ambition of mine.

Please join me again in thanking the Honourable Julia Gillard.

*The Hon Julia Gillard AC*

Thank you.