

SAGE Symposium 2016

The annual SAGE Symposium (2016 being the first) is a calendar highlight for the Australian SAGE Pilot of Athena SWAN. ECU representatives Professor Cobie Rudd, Ms Christine Gunson, Dr Matt Byrne, Associate Professor Mark Lund and Ms Susan Stewart attended this key event in Sydney at the National Maritime Museum on 24 June 2016 along with fellow SAGE Pilot members.

A diverse selection of members from the STEMM spectrum met with senior leaders from institutions participating in the Pilot to discuss how better they can support and develop evidence-based solutions that enhance gender equality in the workplace and inspire women in STEMM to progress.

The symposium had a series of prestigious keynote speakers and panel experts including:

- Elizabeth Broderick AO, Founder of the Male Champions of Change; Business and Social Change Leader;
- Ita Buttrose AO OBE, Editor, 2013 Australian of the Year, Co-host Studio 10;
- David Ruebain, Chief Executive, Equality Challenge Unit, UK;
- Dr Alan Finkel AO FTSE, Australia's Chief Scientist;
- Professor Suzanne O'Reilly FAA, Professor of Geology, Macquarie University; Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Core to Crust Fluid;
- Dr Susan Pond AM, Adjunct Professor, Engineering and Information Technologies, The University of Sydney; and
- Professor Peter Koopman, AAS Equity and Diversity Council; Professor of Developmental Biology; NHMRC Senior Principal Research Fellow, Institute for Molecular Bioscience.

Topics that form a part of the ongoing national gender equality conversation were underpinned by insightful personal stories and experiences. Professor O'Reilly from Macquarie University referred to being excluded from math classes by a male teacher at school. In spite of these barriers, she continued on to become a Macquarie Distinguished Professor and also taught the son of her headmaster in later years!

Ms Elisabeth Broderick, Founder of the Male Champions of Change, discussed the importance of disrupting the status quo and introduced the 'Panel Pledge' whereby male champions can take action by declining to speak at public forums where female speakers are not on the program. This aims to increase the visibility of female experts.

Attendees were given the opportunity to ask speakers about how they envisioned SAGE will transform science and innovation in Australia, the important role of male champions and how to inspire inclusivity within institutions. Mr Ruebain from the Equality Challenge Unit in the UK noted the importance of mentoring schemes and positive action programs in order to 'grow an organisation from within'.

In order to move towards progress and to sustain profound change in gender equality, it is important events such as these take place. Professor Emma Johnston, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) from the University of New South Wales raised the concept of mainstreaming gender equality and how we must recognise discrimination and be aware of implicit biases.



Picture: (standing R) Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Strategic Partnerships) and ECU Lead for Athena SWAN, Professor Cobie Rudd during panel discussions