

Remarks to TCI's women in Policing Conference BY H.E. Governor Nigel Dakin CMG

A very good morning to you all.

I find myself asked to speak about women in policing. It will be self-evident to you that I am neither a women, nor a Police Officer, which makes what I have to say a little more challenging. The risks of being patronising, clumsy or simply irrelevant seem to me to be pretty high.

So let me start on safe ground. Given I rarely get to address such a large audience, of all ranks, what I can say – with complete confidence – is three important 'thank yous' to both female and male Police Officers.

The first is the way you all policed the pandemic. When Governor's and Governments have emergency powers, when laws are being brought into play at pace, when a population is, at least initially, very fearful, when curfews are imposed and normal personal liberties suspended, any Police Force, anywhere in the world, could get the balance between policing with consent, and policing through coercion wrong – and some Forces did.

You – the RTCIPF – did not – and as a result you burnished rather than tarnished this Force's reputation during that difficult time. I think you will see a longer term benefit to this as you roll out community policing. There are certainly important stakeholders in a variety of different communities who reference this period to me as a very positive example of measured policing.

Second, my thanks to you for what you do – day in, day out. I receive the emails from 911 that report serious crime, as it is ongoing, and as a result have a very good understanding of the intense tempo of work you and your male colleagues tackle – on both land and at sea.

Sitting in the Cabinet room yesterday to hear a long burst of rapid gunfire linked to the incident at CIBC took me back to a different time, place and career. Please have no doubt that I do understand the courage you display daily – courage the public expect you to display and which I think they may rather take for granted. I do not take it for granted. That you run towards trouble, as others run away, is not lost on me.

The third thank you is one I give in advance. There's little more we can do to prepare locally for hurricane season – each year there's incremental improvement – but this year a post pandemic hurricane strike, as we bounce out of the difficult period of the last two years, stronger economically than we entered it, would be beyond unfortunate.

So much got put on hold because of the pandemic – Government's bandwidth,

indeed my own bandwidth, was all but overwhelmed in terms of controlling COVID while reigniting the economy and what we all want now is a clear run at delivering a whole range of changes that were delayed, and which the Territory needs.

However, if that calamity does occur then you – and the other uniformed services – come into your own. You did an amazing job in 2017 and I know the sacrifices you made – and the discipline you showed – in terms of prioritising the needs of a broken Territory, over and above the devastation in some of your personal lives – was remarkable. As I go into this hurricane season I can't tell you what a reassurance it is knowing I have the RTCIPF, who have been tested on this recently, and not found wanting, stood alongside myself and the Premier and others who will be co-ordinating our response.

Now to the reason we are here. I'd been in the role of Governor for, I think, less than a month when I attended a ceremony to mark the departure of Commissioner James Smith and the promotion to Commissioner, of Mr Trevor Botting. My predecessor, Governor Freeman, had run the appointment process so this was the first time I was to hear the new Commissioner speak, let alone hear about his priorities. I knew I'd be interested because, being promoted from Deputy Commissioner, he would have seen the Force from a perspective where he was well informed.

I admit to being surprised, on two fronts. The first was that, of the three or so priorities he identified, one was to support women in the Force achieve their full potential. The second was that this was the one moment where there was spontaneous applause from the floor. There was clearly both a significant issue that could be seen from near the top of the Force, and experienced throughout the Force.

It made me think of a conversation I'd had some years earlier with a woman in my team – who I'd just given an outstanding appraisal to and we went on to talk about what was holding her back from going- eventually – for one of the top jobs in the organisation. Because to my mind that was a very straight-forward career path for her, from where she was.

She asked me to imagine how I would feel if every Line Manager I had, between myself (as a man) and the very top of the organisation – were occupied by women? What if every photograph on the wall, of every person who had led the organisation, was a woman. How would it feel – to me as a man – if the objectives of the organisation, determined in a previous century, had been seen as traditional roles that women delivered? And what, if as a result of these three things, the culture that had developed in the organisation was essentially a female culture.

In this situation – and bear in mind nothing I've so far said suggests any individual behaving in a way that was or is inappropriate – how would I see myself in terms of my own freedom of expression, my own ability to bring my whole self to work and most importantly how could I imagine myself at the top – or near the top – of that organisation as compared, say, to a female colleague who was joining alongside me and seemed to be immediately surrounded by leaders and organisational heroes who looked like her.

My answer was – of course – that in those circumstances I would have found it very difficult. As a result of that conversation I do recognise – as I almost certainly didn't recognise at the start of my career – how many advantages I had, that were not because of any talent or work ethic, but bestowed on me because the culture I had joined was a culture that was very much in the image that I saw myself.

So I think the first thing this network is, is a statement that the Force recognises there is this challenge and that for women in the Force to reach their full potential many things have to change but there certainly has to be a cultural shift. Culture does not change quickly, and embedded cultures – which organisations such as the RTCIPF has – frankly risk changing glacially – unless there is some form of forcing mechanism.

There will be pioneers within you who have already pushed hard on this agenda, or managed to navigate the present culture, but there's a saying I rather like – because I've experienced it – which is that it's 'the pioneers that take the arrows and the settlers that take the land'.

In other words a small number of pioneers are almost essential for any serious change to occur but if you want to embed that change you need 'mass'. You need numbers. You need to grind the problem down, not just seek a rapid individual route through it thinking that you alone can change the overall culture.

Some of you in this group will relish being pioneers and I applaud you for it – you are more than necessary – and I'm assuming you have taken some arrows on the way – but if this is to work you need, I think, to move forward as a group – steadily and in your own way as an unstoppable force.

If it helps I've seen this work in other organisations and I could use my own as one. When I was appointed in 2019 every single Governor of every Overseas Territory was a man – in fact a white man. Today, 50% of our Governors are women, including one Black woman and one Asian woman. Change came incredibly slowly but it reached a moment where there was a tipping point and then it came quickly.

Beyond that our Ambassadors in Washington, Canada, Australia, the United Nations, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Beijing and Ukraine are all women. Just a few years ago that list would have been almost exclusively male.

So if we get this right, if you get this right, change is going to occur. I am confident that in this audience there has to be a future Commissioner of the RTCIPF. If you don't believe that – if you don't believe in yourself – no one else can, so please use this network to reaffirm to yourself that your ability and handwork will indeed get you there.

But this isn't just about developing potential leadership. I want us to imagine a future – for a moment – where that change has happened. Let's imagine a meeting where 50% of the leadership of the Force, say from ASP upwards, are women. In this case would a women's network be necessary?

I think it probably would, and let me explain why. To the great credit of TCI, women are in the top roles of Government. When I arrived there was of course a female Premier. The Deputy Governor, the Attorney General, the Chief Justice – who are the people the Territory most relies on – are all women. The Cabinet is 50% women. Most of the Permanent Secretaries are women, including one all of Government relies on – PS Finance – plus the PS's who have had a particularly high profile during the pandemic: Health, Tourism and Immigration. In fact women do so well at the top of Government that the BBC ran an article on this rather remarkable position we are in.

But because I work closely with them – and I have my own family – I know there is a whole set of societal and cultural expectations on them that are not – for example – on me. When our children hit an emotional low point it's Mandy that gets the text or the call, not me – I get the good news, she gets the bad news. When the AG goes home – almost always late – and walks through her front door she stops being the Honourable Rhondalee Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, QC, and becomes a wife and mother with all the expectations that brings. I could go on – some of the PS's are single parents for example – but I think you get the point, because many of you live the point.

However fast gender stereotypes shift they aren't going to have shifted fast enough for you – during your working lives – to not have to manage a whole set of competing priorities that many of your male counterparts do not have to face so – to answer my own question – I do think this type of support network is not only important in terms of helping change a culture within the Force, but also support those in the Force from the extra pressures that other aspects of wider culture bring with it.

I suspect a significant challenge you have already discussed, or will have thought about, is how this network, in trying to solve one set of issues doesn't generate a different set. There is enough division in this Territory without us actively causing more. There will be some male officers who see the formation of this group as a threat. If it allows you to have the confidence to callout and illuminate unacceptable behaviours, that allows disciplinary action to occur, then there is frankly a small group who should feel threatened by this initiative.

But again I suspect one of the most important things you can do is to not allow this group to cement division, but instead use this group to educate and recruit male allies. There may be more than you suspect not least because there is something in this for many of them. Once stereotypes are broken down, as to who is, and who is not successful in an organisation, it's not just – in this particular case – women who will benefit, but also men who do not fit a traditional stereotype of what a senior Police Officer should look like, or indeed how such a person should think or behave.

Beyond the case of 'fairness', and being treated with respect at work – and you can make the case on only those grounds – the organisational business case sits squarely around the benefits that diversity of thought brings. If I hadn't completely absorbed this point before taking on this role – I have now. There is not a paper that has been brought to Cabinet that is not better for having been discussed and contributed to by every member of Cabinet. I

think we made some smart collective decisions during the pandemic but none of those would have been made without the contribution of all.

And we need to be clear when we talk about this sort of diversity that I, for one, am not particularly interested in teams that might increasingly look physically different but all think the same way. So as this network starts to deliver, I'm reasonably confident that – in the wake of your work – a group of men will prosper in the Force, who once might not have prospered.

That is because, what this group will do is help build a genuine understanding in the Force that 'diversity of thought, and experience, and inclusion of all staff' makes the organisation far stronger rather than a Force that is homogenous in its thinking, and a Force where many are excluded. Such a force builds brittleness and weakness. I know which type of Force I want, and the type of Force the Public needs – and I know you do to.

So I wish this network well. I look forward to tracking progress. It's important in that regard that you have the four clear objectives that you do, and at some future point I'd be interested in seeing how we measure progress against each.

You will, I know, forget much I have said but if I can leave you with just one thought it would be to hold in your head the image of a leadership team where 50% or more of those present in the room are women.

If you can see and hold that image – and support each other towards that sort of future – I believe you will find it is achievable. Sustainable change tends to happen very slowly to start with, and very quickly once a tipping point is reached. I am very confident that you are the people, in this Forces long 220 year history, that are going to be remembered as the generation that made that happen. And if I can support you in that endeavour, I most certainly will.