



Amanda O'Brien and delegates

Bringing about change

A debate in Melbourne examined reasons why women are under-represented in the Australian logistics landscape and some points for change, **David Sexton** reports

A GREAT DEBATE LUNCHEON, organised by the Supply Chain and Logistics Association of Australia, thrashed out the issues around the under-representation of women in the national logistics workforce.

The setting was Leonda by the Yarra, a picturesque venue often used for weddings.

SCLAA chairman Amanda O'Brien opened proceedings talking of "a call to action" and that the under-representation of women in logistics was not just an issue for women but for business.

Guest speaker Jodie Broadbent then spoke of her time in the industry and being open to new ideas and being bold.

The panel of guest speakers comprised Jim Mole from Ameropa, Kelly Moy from Hudson Australia, Neerja Narayan from Seqirus Australia, Lydia Kendry from Leadership Management Australia, former director of Globe Motors Peter Trahanas and former logistician Denise Daday.

Erica Gilcrist was MC and talked of "the great safari debate" and being prepared to confront the "elephant in the room".

Below is a selection of comments made by various panellists over the course of the great debate luncheon.

KELLY MOY

"Women do have a tendency to disqualify themselves if they don't meet all the job criteria points. If you have a diverse workforce, you are going to get diverse responses. It's key to remember that the best way of promoting your career is probably through networking rather than [necessarily] through applying for roles online."

PETER TRAHANAS

"Women are just as educated if not more educated than men when they leave university or their educational institution. However, because [women] are keen to get

into the workforce, I think their power of negotiation is diminished. They feel that 'I need to become a bargain' to get into this workplace. Therefore, if someone enters, whether they are male or female and we're talking female here, I would suggest they are starting at a lower base and then they're confronted with managers, supervisors or whoever it might be who have that gender bias. That's where the problem enters. Having seen it from two different cultures [in Australia and the Middle East], I personally look at it and say, 'what I want in a mixture of my group is gender and generation'."

LYDIA KENDRY

"Women like choice and the choice for us is getting our family life balance right. For me, I will take less pay, and a flexible work environment so that I don't miss out on significant events in my children's lives.

David Sexton



Erica Gilcrist
Event MC



Denise Daday
Former logistcian



Amanda O'Brien
SCLAA chairman



Kelly Moy
Hudson Australia



Lydia Kendry
Leadership Management Australia



Neerja Narayan
Seqirus Australia



Peter Trahanas
Formerly of Globe Motors

They grow up way too quick. Negotiating a job is about 'I actually want more time off'. I can work the sixty hours or eighty hours a week, but on school holidays, I want to spend it with my children and making precious memories with my kids. I see the value in that versus the remuneration that I'm paid. One of the things we need to ask ourselves as leaders is: do we actually ask our staff what is important to them? I think sometimes it is more about flexibility for each individual's lifestyle."

JIM MOLE

"Maybe I represent part of the problem because we don't take an aggressive bias towards hiring women. Unfortunately, the logistics type roles are not roles that naturally attract a lot of women coming in as juniors - we call these roles 'dust and rust'. It's a particularly unattractive business to be in. But what we do find is that the women who have progressed through the company in management roles tend to be better employees by far. Bosses are looking for confidence and competence. At times I think it is about confidence. We had a role as a depot manager where we had blokes putting their hands up who were not suited for the role. Yet we had a great young female who should have been a candidate who hadn't put her hand up. The trouble

with really biased approaches to things like gender is you can lose credibility with a lot of other employees unless you're seen to be merit-based, performance-based."

NEERJA NARAYAN

"Why can't we have the same level of [parental] leave for men as for women? Why can't we have six months [leave] for men so they can feel that they can look after the kid? Industry has to change. I feel the legislation or whatever you want to call it has to change.

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Jim Mole

Society has to change that way [rather than] looking at the woman and [thinking], 'she's the one who has to take the baby'. I had my kid and I was back [at work] within six weeks. It's not because I didn't love my kid but I had a goal in my life I had to get to."

DENISE DADAY

"As I've progressed my career, I've always been on par financially but not able to be

part of the boy's club. As I've gotten older, I've got the economic opportunities but not the social ones that come from working in a big company. My last job was with a large corporate and in that sort of environment it was much easier for somebody to take a year [of parental leave] whether they were a father or a mother. But I grew up in a relatively small family business and it would have been almost impossible to let somebody take a year off. Then you

run into that problem that if you get a replacement, they are a lot more qualified than the person who has taken annual leave so there are risks there. I actually tried to work a four-day week when I was looking forward to finishing work and even in sales it was impossible because customers wanted you. I mean they didn't care that I was trying to have a better lifestyle." ■