



**INTRODUCTION**

*“I think women in top jobs have to think smarter, faster, be absolutely thick-skinned, be able to leave work at work, really work hard at dealing with issues not personalities and maintain objectivity and integrity.”*

*Breaking  
Through*

**WOMEN EXECUTIVES**

**IN THE WA PUBLIC SECTOR**

## CONTENTS

- 3 Foreword
- 4 Lynn Allen  
*(Library and Information Service of WA)*
- 6 Lyn Auld  
*(WA Electoral Commission, now State Revenue Department)*
- 8 Jody Broun  
*(Homeswest)*
- 10 Ricky Burges  
*(Perth Zoo, now Ministry for Culture & the Arts)*
- 12 Robyn Crane  
*(Department of Commerce and Trade)*
- 14 Ljiljana Cvijic  
*(Western Australia Police)*
- 16 Judy Iffla  
*(Western Power)*
- 18 Browyn Keighley-Gerardy  
*(Office of the Information Commissioner)*
- 20 Pat J Martin  
*(Sir Charles Gairdener Hospital, now Royal Hobart Hospital, Tasmania)*
- 22 Astrid Norgard  
*(Women's Policy and Development Office)*
- 24 Brenda Robbins  
*(Office of Multicultural Interests)*
- 26 Julie Roberts  
*(Office of the Public Advocate)*
- 28 Lidia Rozlapa  
*(Great Southern Regional College of TAFE)*
- 30 Kerry Sanderson  
*(Fremantle Port Authority)*
- 32 Margaret Seares  
*(Ministry for Culture & the Arts, now University of Western Australia)*
- 34 Jan Stewart  
*(Lotteries Commission)*
- 36 Cheryl Vardon  
*(Education Department of WA)*
- 38 June Williams  
*(Equal Opportunity Commission)*



## FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce *Breaking Through - Women Executives in the WA Public Sector*, which profiles eighteen **successful female executives** in the Western Australian public sector.

Throughout most of the world, women are under-represented at the senior levels of organisations. They tend to be concentrated in the lower paid positions and are not part of the major decision-making processes that occur. Western Australia is no different and, in this the centenary year of Women's Suffrage in Western Australia, we will be focussing on new ways to address this imbalance.

This year the Premier endorsed sector-wide performance objectives to **improve the representation of women** in management in the public sector. These include milestones based on an **improvement in the public sector**, equity index for women and a steady increase in the proportion of women in senior positions.

Breaking Through is an **acknowledgement** of the **important contribution** that executive women in the public sector of WA have made. By briefly documenting their careers, the issues they have addressed and their strategies for success, it is hoped other women aspiring to senior positions in the public sector will find **inspiration** and **positive examples** to follow.

The publication would not have been possible without the participation of the executive women. I thank them for their generosity of spirit in giving their time so freely.

Enjoy Breaking Through. I believe you will find it interesting, informative and useful.



Maxine Murray

Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment

March 1999

**Lynn Allen** *is the State Librarian responsible for over 300 employees and a budget of \$26 million.*

*Name:*  
**Lynn Allen**

*Position:*  
**State Librarian**

*Organisation:*  
**The Library and Information  
Service of Western Australia**

*Qualifications:*  
**PhD, Master of Arts,  
Associate of the Library  
Association of Australia,  
Bachelor of Arts**



## **CAREER HISTORY**

Lynn began her library career in the Geological Survey in the Mines Department in Western Australia. While always setting goals and challenges for herself, her career has taken the occasional unexpected turn.

She worked at the University of Western Australia's Library for thirteen years, prior to working for AWA Computers.

*When I was at the University, I wanted to be the University Librarian. I thought that would be the ultimate and I never saw myself in the private sector. I guess I always knew the broad framework of the kind of job I like doing but it was the private sector that opened my eyes to all the kinds of things that it was possible for me to do.*

## **OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

Lynn has embraced opportunities as they have presented themselves, but not without agonising over the fear of the unknown.

*I've obviously been prepared to take the risk but I wouldn't say it was easy. I mean, I agonised over going to the private sector for weeks. Backwards and forwards - I drove everyone around me insane.*

She ascribes her success to her passion for learning and love of books. "I love to learn. I'm a course junkie. I put myself on learning cycles". She also identified a strong drive to be the best.

*I've always wanted to be the best. That's a positive and negative thing. I always had to be top of the class, always had to be the best at everything. In fact, some of my staff could wring my neck sometimes. They ask "Why do we have to be first, why do we always have to be the best?" and I say "well*

# *Lynn Allen*

*somebody has to be". But it does make me a bit driven.*

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Love of learning
- Intuition
- Pessimism used positively to determine an opportunity
- Hard worker
- Assertiveness

## ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS

Lynn's definition of a mentor is someone who consistently stretches you and assists in the development of your career. In these terms, she identifies a number of her previous supervisors including her Head Librarian at UWA, Leonard Jolley, and the General Manager of AWA Computer Services.

*He used to demand excellence but he used to make you feel you could deliver it and then reward when you did deliver.*

Lynn describes a role model as someone who assists you to develop different skills and includes her Master's degree supervisor, Sister Veronica Brady, and her Ph.D supervisor, Professor Horst Ruthrof, amongst her main role models.

## ADVICE

*For single women and for a woman in a partnership (ie an equal partnership with no children), I cannot see what the barriers would be other than the worst ones which are in our heads. That comes down to self-esteem and assertiveness. A woman whose self esteem is OK, she can mix it with the guys as good as the rest of them.*

*"I've always wanted to be the best.*

*That's a positive and negative thing.*

*I always had to be top of the class, always had to be the best at everything.*

*In fact, some of my staff could wring my neck sometimes.*

*They ask "Why do we have to be first, why do we always have to be the best?" and I say "well somebody has to be".*

*But it does make me a bit driven."*

Name:  
**Lyn Auld**

*Lyn Auld has held a number of positions in the State public service including Deputy Electoral Commissioner. She is currently working at the State Revenue Department.*

Organisation:  
**State Revenue Department**

Qualifications:  
**Master of Industrial Relations, Bachelor of Arts**

### **CAREER HISTORY**

Lyn's first public service appointment was "as a clerical helper in the industrial branch of the Public Service Board".

She quickly moved into industrial relations, spending seven years as an industrial advocate.

*My last position at the Board was providing a combined human resource service. The team I managed provided that service for about a quarter of the public sector in terms of classification advice, personnel policy and industrial relations particularly. That was always my own personal forte, advocacy at the Industrial Relations Commission.*

Lyn has had a broad range of experience at the central agency level. She achieved a management position at the Public Service Board by the time she was thirty and became a Director, Special Projects in the Ministry of Premier and Cabinet not long after. Working in central agencies exposed Lyn to the administration of government and the decision-making processes.

A desire to broaden her operational experience saw Lyn apply for the position of Deputy Electoral Commissioner.

*I thought, from where I had been in terms of central agency work, it was good to get into an operational area. I think it was precisely the right choice to make, as it can be difficult to break out of being in central agencies.*



# *Lyn Auld*

After nineteen months as Acting Electoral Commissioner, which included full responsibility for conducting the 1996 State general election, Lyn moved to the State Revenue Department on the expiry of her term appointment as Deputy Electoral Commissioner.

### OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

While Lyn has not planned her career in a structured sense she has had:

*...some clear notion of what kinds of experience I needed to pick up but not necessary what department that would be found in or what kind of work. My background was such that I could have fitted into a range of departments. Industrial relations is a good training ground for many things, as is human resources management.*

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Hard work
- Diligence

*“Managing the contribution of other people, pulling that together and certainly having an approach that tries to draw things out of people. You’ve got to have the confidence in your staff to let go and create in them the confidence that they can produce results.”*

### ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS

*I’m not 100% sure I really had a mentor to be honest. I suppose three particular men spring to mind in terms of people who have had the confidence in me to give me a range of opportunities.*

*people. You’ve got to have the confidence in your staff to let go and create in them the confidence that they can produce results.*

### ADVICE

*You’ve got to have a clear focus of what your job is about and what things you can contribute to it and work out what sort of novel contribution you can make. In management it’s a lot more about assembling the team around you as well. Managing the contribution of other people, pulling that together and certainly having an approach that tries to draw things out of*

**Jody Broun** *was appointed as Director of Aboriginal Housing at Homeswest in 1994.*

*Name:*  
**Jody Broun**

*Position:*  
**Director Aboriginal Housing**

*Organisation:*  
**Homeswest**

*Qualifications:*  
**Diploma of Teaching  
(Secondary)  
Bachelor of Education  
Master of Philosophy (UWA)**



### **CAREER HISTORY**

Jody trained as a teacher and taught at an Aboriginal College for eight years prior to becoming a public servant.

*It was a hard decision to move out of teaching, but I didn't regret it once I took it.*

*I don't think people realise teaching gives you a lot of skills that you can apply to managerial positions. You get a lot of those skills of how to get people to work in a team and how to get everyone to meet their best potential and do all those sort of things.*

Her current appointment, as Director of Aboriginal Housing, resulted after being contacted as part of an executive search process.



*I was head-hunted. I had already said 'no I'm not interested' and thought about it but just thought I wasn't really ready for it. Then, next thing I was getting those calls 'we are working for such and such and looking for a person to apply for this job' so then I thought I may as well, but it was really a bit of a shock to win this position as it was a bit of a jump for sure.*

*The first 12 months I was on a pretty steep learning curve but that was more to do with the bureaucracy side of it and the processes that Homeswest dealt with. I am still learning those now but the other side of it, managing staff and budgets, wasn't the hard part.*

*Jody Broun*

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Jody thrives on change and challenges. She brings qualities that she associates to both her Aboriginality and gender to the way she manages her team.

*I think relationships with your work colleagues are pretty important and they should be more than just a work colleague. I like to know a bit about everyone's personal life, and how it affects their workload. I find a lot of non-Aboriginal people won't talk about any of their personal things at work, they don't want people to know anything about their personal life. They keep that really separate whereas we have parties at our house or people will come in if we have drinks upstairs, partners come in and kids come and it's very friendship-orientated rather than just strictly work, and never the twain shall meet type of thing. We do a lot more of that and I think that works well.*

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- A strong sense of self
- Strength
- Prepared to take on a challenge
- No fear of failure

*“...I was on a pretty steep learning curve but that was more to do with the bureaucracy side of it and the processes that Homeswest dealt with. I am still learning those now but the other side of it, managing staff and budgets, wasn't the hard part.”*

## ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS

Strong influences in Jody's life are her mother and family friend Sue Gordon. These women have combined paid work and family responsibilities, challenged the status quo and worked tirelessly to 'change things that might not have been done properly'.

*Name:*  
**Ricky Burges**

*Position:*  
**Chief Executive Officer  
(now Director General)**

*Organisation:*  
**Perth Zoological Gardens  
(Perth Zoo).  
(now Ministry for Culture  
& the Arts)**

*Qualifications:*  
**Grad. Diploma Human  
Resources Development  
Gestalt Therapist**



**Ricky Burges** *attained the position of Chief Executive Officer at the Perth Zoo in 1995. She is the first female to hold the position. Ricky was appointed Director General, Ministry for Culture and the Arts in June, 1998.*

### **CAREER HISTORY**

*I was identified as a person who had really good human resource development skills. The Zoo was identified as having some fairly major and significant problems with relationships. So I think that's the first thing, they needed someone who could look at those issues. They could manage with a person who didn't have other skills, but they definitely couldn't manage with someone who didn't have good people skills and that was the way that I was first introduced to the Zoo.*

A twenty-year career in human resource development in both the private and public sectors preceded her current position. This includes work as a personnel manager with a large legal firm and seven years with Western Australian Tourism Commission as Director of Human Resources.

*“I feel I am able to know my blind spots,  
know my weaknesses and feel OK about them.  
I don't have this deep panic because  
I have messed up on something.”*

# *Ricky Burges*

*I've had a human resources background which is unusual to come from. There are not many of us, but I suspect one of the themes for the future will be more people with human resource or what's called "soft" backgrounds, will come into positions of leadership.*

Ricky was the 1997 Western Australian Institute of Management Businesswoman of the Year.

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Ricky acknowledges her achievement is based on her ambition and "the driving need to be in a position of influence". A major turning point in terms of her self-belief and success was the attainment of her university degree in 1994.

*I was a late uni goer and I think I had survived for a long time on natural ability and sort of an innate ability to get things done, as I think a lot of women do. I was in my late 30's when I decided to do uni and that's changed my life. That was a real turning point and I appreciate now how important learning is and having that strong foundation. I have gone from a person who felt*

*that I couldn't possibly do a degree to, in 1994, the top graduate in human resource development.*

Ricky is also a qualified Gestalt therapist and does not underestimate the effect of her studies in psychotherapy.

She credits the resulting self-awareness and self-development as a major influence in how she performs as a CEO.

*I feel I am able to know my blind spots, know my weaknesses and feel OK about them. I don't have this deep panic because I have messed up on something or can't do something or whatever. If I have a session of the self-doubts, I can talk about it with somebody else and sort it out as opposed to being afraid to show you my vulnerable parts. I think that's important because if you don't, and you lock it up, it just overflows and gets really messy.*

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Confidence
- Ambition
- Psychological maturity (self-belief and understanding)
- Strong work ethic
- Commitment

## ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS

*Interestingly enough, when I think of women role models, I haven't had one. As a woman, I haven't had somebody that I could see in a work environment who I could model myself on.*

## ADVICE

*It is really important to be aware of yourself because, if you don't know yourself, how can you possibly know or understand anyone else.*

*You need psychological maturity, resilience, strength of character, conviction, all those things that enable you to bounce back for another go at something after you have had a few knocks. I think it's just vital to have a good education and be informed about whatever you are doing. You cannot survive without a lifetime ambition of ongoing learning.*

**Robyn Crane** *was appointed Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Pilbara Development Commission in 1997 and continues to hold the position of Director of the South Hedland Enhancement Scheme for the Department of Resources Development.*

*Name:*  
**Robyn Crane**

*Positions:*  
**Acting Chief  
Executive Officer  
Pilbara Development  
Commission**

**Director  
South Hedland  
Enhancement Scheme**

*Organisation:*  
**Department of Commerce  
and Trade**



### **CAREER HISTORY**

A history of community involvement and local government in the North West of Western Australia preceded Robyn's career in the state public service.

*When we arrived in Western Australia in 1971 our destination was Paraburdoo. Then, the North West comprised of developing townships with basic infrastructure. If the need for additional facilities was identified, the community worked together to establish them. Due to having three children and identifying the lack of childcare facilities, I worked with a group of women to establish a childcare centre in Dampier. The resultant association grew to one that managed three centres and became the largest non profit childcare organisation in Western Australia. I worked as administrator of the association for 10 years.*

*In 1976, I was elected as a Roebourne Shire Councillor to represent the Dampier Ward. All the other councillors were male. I believe that I would be the only woman elected to council by almost 100% male vote. At that time the persons who held the lease were entitled to two votes per property. As Dampier was a company town, the leases were held by employees of the company who, in the main, were male. This resulted in the employee of the household having two votes and their spouse none.*

*It took considerable effort to convince councillors and council staff that the Shire's business was more than rates, roads and rubbish. I must have been convincing, as in 1979, I was elected to the position of Shire President.*

# *Robyn Crane*

After ten years at the childcare association and local government, Robyn felt in need of a change. After considering her options, she applied for and won the position of Pilbara Regional Coordinator with the Department of Regional Development and the North West in June 1995.

*I am a great supporter of regional development because I believe in empowering the people living in regions to obtain the facilities and access to services that people living in the city just expect. This is something regional communities really have to work towards achieving.*

Robyn has held a number of positions with a regional focus in the Department of State Development and the Department of Commerce and Trade. Prior to her current appointment as Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Pilbara Development Commission, she was Director of the South Hedland Enhancement Scheme, a position that she still holds.

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Pro-active
- Needing to be challenged
- Risk-taker
- Belief in what you're doing
- Tenacious

## ADVICE

*If you want to make a difference, you have to get in there and try to influence that change. I think a number of women do not recognise the fact that they are trying to do everything, working and raising a family as well as many other tasks.*

*They have to learn that there are tasks you must pass on to others. Women have demonstrated that they can delegate at work but I am not sure that they delegate to the same level at home. I think women have a guilt complex along the lines of 'I am achieving in the workplace consequently I must be seen to be also achieving at home'. Superwoman, you do not hear this term used as frequently today, but I am convinced that this concept is one that women feel they must accomplish.*

***“I think a number of women do not recognise the fact that they are trying to do everything, working and raising a family as well as many other tasks.”***

*Ljiljana Cvijic is one of four female senior sergeants in the Western Australia Police Service.*

*Name:*

**Ljiljana (Lilly) Cvijic APM**

*Position:*

**Senior Sergeant,  
Officer in Charge,  
Joondalup Police Station**

*Organisation:*

**Western Australia Police  
Service**

*Qualifications:*

**Diploma of Policing  
Associate Diploma of  
Business (Legal Studies)**



## **CAREER HISTORY**

Initially trained as a stenographer, Lilly aimed to join either the police or air force after working overseas at the Australian High Commission in London and the Australian Embassy Immigration Office in West Germany.

*After travelling for three years, I needed a job that would keep me totally engrossed.*

*Over the years with the police service I found that there is no such thing as a planned day. The changing environment on a day-to-day basis and not knowing what was going to happen created an air of excitement which was something special.*

*There were restrictions imposed on women entering the predominantly male-dominated police force and, while I waited to become a police officer, I joined the public service as a typist. Most of that time was spent in the police environment at the Liquor and Gaming Branch, Perth Traffic Branch, the Women's Police Office, and at Fremantle*

*Traffic and the Criminal Investigation Branch. This provided me with a good insight into policing whilst I waited for my application for the Police Force to be processed. I was successfully inducted into the Police Force and it has been a very fulfilling experience.*

In 1974, when Lilly joined the force, female officers were a separate entity.

*Our main consideration was looking after the welfare of women and children. Of course, we didn't have uniforms and we didn't go to the Police Academy for full time training. We were trained on the job and only attended the Academy for selected lectures on subjects that they thought would be appropriate for women in the job, and we didn't investigate any real criminal work.*

After 18 months an opportunity arose to work in the Criminal Investigation Branch as a junior officer. Almost immediately, the senior officer resigned and Lilly was responsible for both positions.

*Ljiljana Cvijic*

Lilly's skills as a stenographer meant she often got involved in serious crime because of her ability to provide competent administrative support.

*A lot of the detectives couldn't type. Typing wasn't taught at the Academy back then. I often became involved with very serious crime, with the responsibility of collating all the information in the office relevant to the inquiry. This gave me good grounding to become a detective.*

*In the past women were not given the opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities. Often you were second-in-charge of a unit or section and rather than allowing you to step into the acting position of Officer-in-Charge, a male officer would be sent in to relieve in the position. I was second in charge at both the Child Abuse Unit and the Warwick CIB and then when I was promoted to Detective Sergeant in 1990, I became the first female Duty Sergeant in the Criminal Investigation Branch.*

Winning a Winston Churchill fellowship enabled Lilly to travel to the USA, Canada and UK in 1989 to study child abuse investigation techniques. Her report to the fellowship committee received a commendation for excellence from the Trust.

In 1990, a new initiative commenced to provide a support system for the victims of crime in WA. Lilly was involved from its conception and also established the Police Victims of Crime Unit. For the past 12 months she has been the Officer in-Charge of the Joondalup Police Station.

### **OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

The daughter of refugees from the former Yugoslavia, Lilly has experienced prejudice first hand. Her response has been to work hard and become involved in resolving community issues. This involvement continues today in both her paid and unpaid work.

She is currently the Commissioner's appointed representative for Western Australia on the Australasian Women in Policing Advisory Committee that advises on issues directly affecting female staff in the Police Service. A major aim is to ensure that the talents of women are fully recognised and utilised.

Her distinguished career includes a number of awards and commendations. In 1996 she was awarded the Australian Police Medal for her service to the community in the Australia Day Honours. In 1997 she received a Paul Harris Fellowship from the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International in recognition for service to victims of crime.

Most recently she received a Certificate of Merit from the International Association of Women Police for her contribution to women in society and women in policing. Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Hard work and tenacity
- Spirituality
- Desire to make a difference

Name:  
**Judy Iffla**

Position:  
**Manager, Business  
Information**

Organisation:  
**Western Power**

Qualifications:  
**Bachelor of Business**



**Judy Iffla** *is the most senior woman at Western Power.  
An organisation with few female employees.*

### **CAREER HISTORY**

Judy has worked at Western Power since completing her degree in 1983. Initially starting as a graduate programmer she has worked on projects that have introduced new information technologies to Western Power.

*I had been working in the Information Technology Department originally as a programmer, but then as an analyst and later on as a project leader. It's a fairly typical career path in IT. I became a data administrator which is a bit more specialised and headed up one of the sections in the branch. It was after I had been doing that for a couple of years that the utility split and the opportunity for this position came up. I guess I was, in a sense, in the right place at the right time.*

Initially, attracted to the management of IT projects, Judy had no plans to become a manager.

*I didn't plan to become a manager. I think at the time my interests were in project management and administration, or day-to-day administration. These were areas where there was a lot of ability to look at new technology and projects to initiate those technologies and bring them into the business. I hadn't particularly thought that I wanted to become a branch manager and I guess I had never had that as a specific ambition. I had seen it as a rather difficult and fairly political role.*

*Judy Iffla*

*“I didn’t plan to become a manager.*

*I think at the time my interests were in project management and administration, or day-to-day administration. These were areas where there was a lot of ability to look at new technology and projects to initiate those technologies and bring them into the business.”*

### OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

On assessment and with the encouragement of her supervisors, Judy applied for and was appointed to the position of Manager of Business Information.

At the time of interview Judy had recently returned from nine months’ parental leave and acknowledged that one of her major challenges was to find the balance between work and family.

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Ability to work well in teams
- Self-confidence
- Ability to accomplish set tasks
- Knowledge of subject area

### ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS

Immediate supervisors and managers have presented themselves as mentors from whom Judy was able to learn about both project and people management. Role models include her mother who pursued a career in physiotherapy at a time when few women did.

Name:

**Bronwyn Keighley-Gerardy**

Position:

**Information Commissioner**

Organisation:

**Office of the Information  
Commissioner**

Qualifications:

**Bachelor of Arts (Industrial  
Relations), Bachelor of Laws,  
Bachelor of Jurisprudence**

**Bronwyn Keighley-Gerardy's appointment to Information Commissioner in 1993 came after a 23 year career in the WA police service.**

### **CAREER HISTORY**

Once Bronwyn decided to be a career police officer, she commenced her studies at technical school and university in the evenings. Eventually she was accepted into law at the University of Western Australia.

*I asked for four hours' study leave and offered to work the East Perth Courts of Petty Sessions on every Saturday to make up for my leave, and was turned down in no uncertain terms. So, that made me mad, and I thought, "well I have worked hard to get into law I am not going to let them stop me". So I immediately applied to go back to general duties and I juggled my shift work around my studies. I did that for four years.*

*"I applied for this job in a fit of pique with the Department because of the lack of perceived merit at the senior ranks. It was certainly merit in the lower rank promotions, but not so much in the senior. When I was told by the Deputy Commissioner that I had to wait my turn like everyone else in senior ranks, I thought, "what the hell am I doing here?"*



# *Bronwyn Keighley-Gerardy*

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Throughout her career, Bronwyn has consistently challenged the status quo.

*When I was applying to join the CIB I applied, and I applied and I applied, and I just kept applying, thinking I would wear them down. Because of the seniority system, once your number (because they took people in according to numbers) had gone past, they wouldn't go back. Then they realised that they were getting very young and inexperienced constables into the CIB and passing over a lot of experienced, more mature people. So they decided that the seniority system according to number did not govern you getting into the CIB and they were prepared then to take anybody who applied and fitted the bill. So once they did that, I reapplied and that's when they decided to take in the first two women.*

This tenacity and stubbornness was necessary in the face of considerable resistance to the idea of female police officers. At the time, female officers were required to resign on marriage and there was a limit (or quota) on the number of female officers allowed into the force. Bronwyn has had a significant influence in changing male attitudes toward female officers and provided an important role model for women. Bronwyn's pursuit of excellence, strong work ethic and fundamental belief that women are as capable as men, led to a distinguished career in the police service. She does wonder if she would have achieved the same success had she and her husband chosen to have children – but she thinks not. Her achievements, alongside those of other women, mean there is currently no division of the police force that women are unable to join. Ironically, she finally felt compelled to move elsewhere because the Service remains “a male patriarchal society in microcosm”. It may have made progress, but the dominant organisational culture still reflects male values. The outcome is that “the rhetoric of equality isn't always matched with actions.”

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Strong work ethic
- Patience and persistence
- Self-confidence
- Assertiveness
- Career commitment
- Credibility
- Risk-taker

## ADVICE

- *Participate and undertake activities*
- *Commit yourself to a career*
- *Have confidence in yourself and your abilities*
- *Get a broad range of experience to establish credibility*
- *Be seen, be heard and be good at what you do*

*Name:*  
**Pat J Martin**

*Position:*  
**Acting Chief Executive Officer  
(now Chief Executive Officer)**

*Organisation:*  
**Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital  
WA (now Royal Hobart  
Hospital, Tasmania)**

*Qualifications:*  
**Master Applied Science,  
Grad. Dip. Health Services,  
Midwifery, Registered Nurse**



**Pat Martin** *acted as Chief Executive Officer at the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital for three years. She has recently been appointed Chief Executive Officer at the Royal Hobart Hospital, Tasmania.*

### **CAREER HISTORY**

Pat's career has evolved alongside the nursing profession in Australia.

*I'm a nurse by background. I started nursing relatively late. I was nearly 23 when I started my training. I trained in a hospital program in Melbourne - and I decided while I was still a student that nursing management left a lot to be desired. I felt that it was inflexible and autocratic and I figured that I could probably do better. So fairly early in the piece, while I really liked clinical nursing, I wanted to go into management.*

*I didn't like the system so I figured I had to get into a position where I felt I could change the system. That was naive at that point, but I guess that's how everyone starts.*

Pat's first senior management post was in the private sector. Pat was appointed the first lay Director of Nursing at St Anne's Hospital, Mount Lawley in 1982. She returned to Victoria to take up an appointment as Deputy Director of Nursing at a major teaching hospital, The Alfred, in 1983. In 1988, Pat returned to Western Australia to take up the position of Director of Nursing at King Edward Memorial Hospital.

*I think women in top jobs  
have to think smarter, faster, be absolutely thick-skinned,  
be able to leave work at work, really work hard  
at dealing with issues not personalities and maintain  
objectivity and integrity.*

*Pat Martin*

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

In her nursing student days, another major drive into management was the frustration Pat experienced at the socialisation of nurses in this country. Nurses were regarded as having a lower status. For example, nurses were expected, in fact, required to stand back to allow senior staff and doctors into lifts and through doors first. This irked Pat immensely.

*I would avoid the lift and go down the stairs because I couldn't bring myself to do that. I don't think that making people subservient is a good way to manage anyone. The system of education of nurses at that stage, which was quite rightly called training as opposed to education, also annoyed me. It was such a waste. When I think about it I suppose I thought maybe somehow I could change that.*

The education and training of nursing staff has altered radically in the last twenty years and the government system was initially slow to respond.

*It's really only in the last 20 years that nurses have actually gone into senior or more broad-based positions with some education to back it up.*

*When I did my Masters in 1980/81, there were no nursing masters programs in this country. Now there are many.*

*I had completed a Nursing Administration course in 1976. When I did my Masters Degree, I didn't do it in business, I did it in applied science and actually did the research and evaluation stream. When I graduated I think I was one of five nurses in the whole of this country who had a Masters Degree.*

*I undertook my Masters studies in WA and when I finished nobody would employ me. The assumption was, that a nurse who undertook further academic studies must be an "educator" otherwise, what was the point of additional studies.*

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Tenacity
- Hard work
- Sense of humour
- A genuine urge to make a difference, to get things done
- Lateral thinking and keeping an eye on the bigger picture
- Organisational abilities
- The capacity to make an objective assessment of the situation

## ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS

Pat recognised that she had one major mentor.

*My mentor recognised that I had good management skills, good leadership skills, good organisational skills, those sort of things.*

*Organising comes very easy to me. I am the eldest of five. You develop these skills before you know the meaning of the words.*

## ADVICE

*I think women in top jobs have to think smarter, faster, be absolutely thick-skinned, be able to leave work at work, really work hard at dealing with issues not personalities and maintain objectivity and integrity.*

*I suppose for me the three things which are most important are knowing what you don't know, having a very good sense of humour and probably a sense of the ridiculous along with it, as well as a real empathy for people.*

**Astrid Norgard** *was appointed to her current position as*

*Name:*  
**Astrid Norgard**

*Chief Executive Officer of the Women's Policy  
Development Office in November 1996.*

*Position:*  
**Chief Executive Officer**

*Organisation:*  
**Women's Policy and  
Development Office**

*Qualifications:*  
**Bachelor of Arts Hons  
(Sociology/Anthropology)**



### **CAREER HISTORY**

Astrid's career in the Commonwealth public sector commenced in Canberra after she completed her undergraduate degree in Perth. She was one of a graduate intake of 30 from all around Australia.

*When I began, there was a pay differential. There was a male on the course who had first class honours in sociology, the same as mine, and he got \$400 a year or 10% more than I did. That was the first time it really hit me that, in fact, there was something different about being a woman. It wasn't until 1972, that there was equal pay and awards for women, that things changed.*

*I went to Canberra not really knowing what I wanted to do, except that I wanted to leave Perth for a while. At least I was*

*earning money, and my fare was paid. I found myself in a peer group where I was more comfortable than I had ever been, I suppose. There were these 30 young graduates and there was a real camaraderie and that was very sustaining.*

Astrid describes how in her naivety, she applied for jobs in the Government Gazette that were of interest to her, regardless of their level. As a result, within three years she was working as Executive Assistant to Emeritus Professor Peter Karmel then Chairman of the Universities Commission. A position classified four levels above her entry level to the public service, an unheard of achievement for a woman of her age. After 18 months or so with the Commission, Astrid recalls:

*"I'm not one of those people who always had in mind exactly where I wanted to go or what I wanted to do. I still feel a fraud when people ask me about career planning and things like that because it has never been part of my scene."*

*Astrid Norgard*

*All of a sudden, there I was, 26 I think. I had come to Canberra for a year and I was still there four years on. I never saw myself as a career public servant but I could feel myself getting a taste of power I suppose. I was moving quickly and people were talking about me in terms of a future head of department and all this sort of stuff. I thought, uh uh, I've got to get out of here and do other things. So I resigned. Professor Karmel asked what I was going to do. I said 'I'm going to travel around Australia with a couple of friends in a 4-wheel drive and I'm going overseas for a couple of years.' Professor Karmel was very supportive and told me it was a decision I would never regret. I never have.*

On her return to Perth, Astrid worked at Murdoch University and the then newly-formed Family Planning Association as an Education Officer.

*It was very interesting but a burn out job. After about 18 months I'd had enough but I learnt a lot about running groups, group dynamics, values clarification, being honest with people and non-judgemental, all those sorts of things.*

Astrid moved on to a position at the Perth

office of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

*During that time I had my son. The department was excellent. They restructured my job so that I didn't have to do as much field work as I had been doing because that was going to be hard with a baby. My son Dan was always welcome at office parties and things like that. He became an integral part of the office scene. When I went travelling I would take him up to the field and he was an asset. If I needed to be talking for instance to Aboriginal women I, as a woman with a child at foot, was a much more valuable and credible person than just a woman or a bureaucrat. So I've often told women that children can be real assets. Don't have your first thought of a child as a burden or an obstacle or something extra you've got to deal with. Try and bring the child in as a plus in your life including your working life.*

A distinguished career in the Departments of Immigration and Social Security followed, prior to her appointment as Regional Manager, Border Management at the Australian Customs Service in 1994. She was, as far as could be ascertained,

the first woman in Australia to hold such a position. Appointments of women in two other States quickly followed.

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Astrid has refused to allow the prejudice of others to deter her.

*There was a delegation from the Border staff before my appointment. Two issues: one you couldn't have an outsider come into customs because it's a cradle-to-the-grave career and you get carefully inducted. Secondly, you could not have a woman, you simply could not have a woman in charge of the most traditional macho area of Customs. The State Director said to the delegation "well I hear what you're saying but you know, the fact is that it's going to happen." And I have to say that once I got there, apart from a couple of things, the staff were really courteous and supportive, helpful and loyal.*

Qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Sense of humour
- Strong self-esteem
- Risk taker and a sense of adventure
- Valuing diversity
- Fiercely independent

## ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS

None in particular. Both parents are significant influences. Professor Peter Karmel remains a friend.

**Brenda Robbins** *is one of the longest serving executive women in the Western Australian public sector.*

*Name:*  
**Brenda Robbins**

*Position:*  
**Executive Director**

*Organisation:*  
**Office of Multicultural Interests**

*Qualifications:*  
**Bachelor of Arts (Economics)  
UWA  
Post Graduate Studies in  
Economics  
Diploma in Company  
Directorship**



### **CAREER HISTORY**

Brenda has held a number of chief executive positions in the State Government including the Subiaco Redevelopment Authority, Department of State Services and the Office of Industrial Relations. She held the position of Assistant Public Service Commissioner prior to the establishment of the *Public Sector Management Act, 1994*.

Brenda is a Commissioner on the Legal Aid Commission, was a member of the Senate of the University of Western Australia for 12 years and is a past President of the Institute of Management (WA). She is also a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management and the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

*I've been in executive management for about eighteen years and was probably one of the youngest chief executive officers when I was in my early thirties and appointed as Director of the former Landbank.*

Brenda commenced her career in the public sector as part of a graduate management intake in 1969. Graduates were actively recruited directly from the University and provided with the opportunity to work on special projects with senior people.

*We had the opportunity, very early in our career, to meet with relatively senior people. For example, I was placed in Treasury and very quickly had involvement with the Under Treasurer and departments at senior level in producing documents that went up to Cabinet about the State's future economic directions.*

In many respects, Brenda has been one of the pioneers for women in senior management in the Western Australian public sector. Her appointment to Director of Landbank was considered a meteoric rise, an outstanding achievement both in terms of her age and gender.

*I'd go to a function and they'd be two hundred men and me. At that time I think*

# *Brenda Robbins*

*you were pioneering acceptance of women in executive levels and you had to get confidence of people in a way not expected of men. That's probably something that's easily forgotten that it's recent history that women have broken through, albeit in small numbers, and made that pathway and how isolating it could actually be at times. You couldn't feel vulnerable, you always had to feel positive and constructive and powerful.*

## **OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

Brenda has always strived to balance her paid work and family commitments.

*I want to have balance in my life. I'm not going to deliberately be seen to work horrendous hours, simply because I believe that's the way to succeed. Executive management requires hard work and there are times when you may have to put long hours in at the office, but I'd rather take work home.*

*I believe the other elements of your life – family, community involvement and personal interests enrich a person and enhance their leadership capacity.*

***“I believe the other elements of your life – family, community involvement and personal interests enrich a person and enhance their leadership capacity.”***

Qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Competence and hard work
- Risk taking
- Vision
- Tenacity
- Enjoying what you do

## **ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS**

*I found that the mentoring happened at the junior levels rather than when you got to middle or executive management level. At the junior level, I think people recognise what you can do on their behalf were prepared to promote and support you.*

*I came up through the period when there weren't female role models. We really had to make the opportunities and therefore I have gone out of my way to try and encourage and provide mentorship to young women and support women peers.*

## **ADVICE**

*You have to be responsible for yourself. Nobody else is responsible for you and you have to take charge of your career. I think that means things like developing skills in the areas that you need them. It means having positive and constructive working relationships with people. It means that you have to take the opportunity to market yourself when you have to promote your career and keep in touch with the ever changing relationships in small 'p' politics.*

**Julie Roberts** *was appointed Public Advocate in 1997  
after a career in social work.*

*Name:*  
**Julie Roberts**

*Position:*  
**Public Advocate**

*Organisation:*  
**Office of the Public Advocate**

*Qualifications:*  
**Bachelor of Applied Science  
(Social Work)**



## **CAREER HISTORY**

The opportunity to work as Public Advocate occurred in 1996 following a resignation. The appointment was something of a surprise and challenge to Julie given she had been at the office for a short period of time.

*I thought, honestly, it was premature for me to move into the Public Advocate's job at the time. I don't now, but at the time I did. As the Deputy I was the most obvious choice to act but it still came as a shock.*

Julie has worked as a case worker and senior social worker in the government and non-government sectors holding positions with Family and Children's Services, Parkerville Children's Home, the Catherine McAuley Centre and Westrail, until she was appointed the Deputy Public Advocate in 1994.

Although not planned in any formal sense, Julie's career has evolved due to a desire for new challenges and enjoyment.

*I've never seen myself as actually moving to the level of running an organisation. It just occurred. I've never seen myself as being ambitious, but management positions have come along and I have acted in them at different times, but it's not really been planned. It's really been a matter of me enjoying what I'm doing and then getting bored with doing the same thing and deciding that I wanted to get out of casework which I was doing and moving more into a management area or a supervisory level.*

At the time of interview the position was in the process of being advertised. Julie has since been substantively appointed Public Advocate.

# *Julie Roberts*

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Maintaining a balance between paid work and her personal life is a high priority for Julie.

*I suppose I've not sought out management positions because I value my personal life and time.*

*I realise, particularly having acted for this length of time, the difference in the level of expectation. Not really so much the expectations that come from outside, but what comes from within as you step up the ladder, and assume responsibility for running an organisation. Then there are responsibilities to the people in the organisation as well as to clients.*

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Sense of humour
- Desire for change and challenges
- Honesty
- Problem solving and lateral thinking
- Leading by example
- Preparedness to make a mistake and admit it

*I believe I am able to confront people, but not so I tear them to shreds. I am able to confront them with respect and leave them with their dignity intact.*

## ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS

There have been two women and a man that Julie identifies as managers who have influenced her management style.

*“I believe I am able to confront people, but not so I tear them to shreds. I am able to confront them with respect and leave them with their dignity intact.”*

## ADVICE

*I think women can be too honest, but that's the way I operate, when confronting corporate politics.*

**Lidia Rozlapa** is the Managing Director/CEO of the Great Southern Regional College of TAFE in Albany. This College of TAFE provides training to an area of 40,000 square kilometres across the lower Great Southern Region of Western Australia.

Name:  
**Lidia Rozlapa**

Position:  
**Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer**

Organisation:  
**Great Southern Regional College of TAFE**

Qualifications:  
**Bachelor of Education,  
Diploma of Teaching  
Diploma of Typing (London)  
Diploma of Pitmans  
Shorthand (London)  
Diploma in Secretarial Studies**



### **CAREER HISTORY**

Lidia's 30 year career has been within the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector. Leaving school at 14, she went to Business College and then into the paid workforce. Continuing her study part time, she began teaching in the TAFE sector. "I wasn't actually planning to become a managing director. It really sort of happened as a matter of course. To me it just seemed like a natural progression." In 1993, Lidia was appointed Director of the Regional TAFE College in Albany.

### **OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

Balancing work and family has been an important feature of Lidia's career.

*I was always interested in a career, but I was also interested in my personal life. I felt they needed to be balanced. For the first 10 or 15 years I was more concerned with having a family and doing some study, and just enjoying my life.*

*I got to about age 40 and I thought 'where am I actually heading?'. I had been in positions of Senior Lecturer, Head of Department, Associate Director, Campus Manager and I'd had all these roles and, when I reached 40, I thought 'well, I'm either going to stay lecturing or I've got to go and finish my degree.'*

Lidia completed her degree in 1989 and consciously pursued a role in management and administration.

# *Lidia Rozlapa*

*When appointed as an Associate Director to Central Metropolitan College I knew I had to look at different areas to manage, so when given my choice of several portfolios to manage, I asked for Building and Construction at Leederville Campus. This gave me a totally different management perspective. I had to learn to manage the Corporate Services of the organisation not just the curriculum. This was a weighty challenge as I knew absolutely nothing about building and construction. But hanging off the edge of a cliff is always the best way to make it quickly to the top.*

*My next challenge then came a few years later when I was appointed as Managing Director/CEO to the Great Southern Regional College in Albany and this is where I took up mountain climbing.*

***“I believe that you have to devolve responsibility down to the lowest level.***

***You can’t do everything yourself.”***

*I believe that you have to devolve responsibility down to the lowest level. You can’t do everything yourself. People manage their own environment, they get married, they have children, they look after their families. I’m not talking about males or females, I’m talking about any gender and then they come to work and they say ‘but I’m only a level 1’. What I’ve done is allowed people to accept responsibility at all levels and come in and make a difference. Although there are distinctions in levels in public service, I think everybody, given the right environment, can really excel.*

Qualities that have facilitated her success:

- An ability to adapt to new environments
- Empowering staff
- Sense of humour
- The ability to listen
- Hard work
- Fitness

## **ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS**

Lidia found that the senior men within WA Department of Training have been supportive as her career progressed and in particular her then Director at Central Metro in Perth.

Her involvement with the AUSTAFE Association has provided a national network of colleagues and associates and a broader understanding of the National AUSTAFE Executive for WA. Lidia uses meetings and conferences as an opportunity to share and collect new ideas that may benefit her College.

## **ADVICE**

- Aim for a balance in all things and be happy with what you do
- Find or develop an effective stress management technique
- Be confident in your own ability
- Network



**Kerry Sanderson** *joined the Fremantle Port Authority in an acting capacity in 1991 with confirmation of appointment in 1992. She has led the Authority through a period of significant change which has resulted in a reduction in the workforce by some 75% and a return to profitability.*

*Name:*  
**Kerry Sanderson**

*Position:*  
**Chief Executive Officer**

*Organisation:*  
**Fremantle Port Authority**


*Qualifications:*  
**Bachelor of Science (Double  
Major in Mathematics),  
Bachelor of Economics**



### **CAREER HISTORY**

A commitment to maximising benefits to the community rather than value for shareholders meant a public sector career held more appeal for Kerry.

Her career began at State Treasury where she spent seventeen years. From her initial position as Research Officer she rose to the position of Director of the Economic and Financial Policy Division. A catalyst in seeking a position in another public sector organisation was provided by the then Under Treasurer.

Two large, faint, purple female symbols (a circle with a vertical line and a cross at the bottom) are positioned in the background of the text area.

*I was working in Treasury, and I enjoyed it. I probably would have stayed there, except that the then Under Treasurer, on retiring, said to me –‘you really should go and work somewhere else for a while to get the right experience’. At the same time I had been thinking about transport and exporters and how important transport was.*

# *Kerry Sanderson*

A desire to help exporters led Kerry to the position of Deputy Director General of Transport.

*I got the job as Deputy Director General of Transport and I was some four years there when the Fremantle Port Authority was found to be experiencing several problems. One of these was a financial problem but another one was waterfront reform and they hadn't worked out how to restructure industrially and commercially. My background in Treasury, from a commercial perspective, and the Department of Transport, where I chaired the Government's waterfront reform working group, had given me a good background. I'd also been involved with a review at Fremantle Port Authority, which had identified the key problems. So I felt I'd been lucky to be given the opportunity to come in and help achieve the necessary changes.*

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Kerry makes time to participate on advisory groups and boards – state and national – and maintains contact with clients and customers. Combining a career in the paid workforce with family responsibilities requires considerable energy and time management.

*You've just got to balance your time. You've got to be precise and clearly state the time you can allocate.*

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Positive-thinking and self-belief
- Efficacious – if at first you don't succeed try again
- Determined
- Team worker
- Networker
- High energy
- Participation and involvement
- Balance between work, family and involvement on boards and committees

***“You've just got to balance your time.***

***You've got to be precise and clearly state***

***the time you can allocate.”***

Name:

**Margaret Seares**

Position:

**Executive Director**

Organisation:

**Department for the Arts  
(now UWA)**

Qualifications:

**PhD (UWA), Master of Arts**

**Margaret Seares** is a career academic rather than public servant. At the time of interview, she held the Executive Director position at the Department for the Arts on a two-year secondment. Margaret has returned to academia as Executive Director of Community Relations at the University of Western Australia. She is also Chair of the Australia Council.

#### **CAREER HISTORY**

Margaret's background and training is as a musicologist and she is a proficient harpsichordist. Margaret has performed with ensembles such as the Polish Chamber Orchestra and Western Australian Symphony Orchestra. Her career emerged from her interests and likes. The ability to combine research, teaching and performing attracted Margaret to the academic sector.

*I have to say, I'm one of those shameful people who has never planned my career. I think I have a pretty fatalistic view of life actually. I think things come up and you either choose to go down this path or that path. So far, I have been really happy with what has transpired.*

Continuing in the paid workforce (part-time) once she had children is the one conscious decision Margaret recalls making with respect to her career. She does however identify a number of critical decision points such as starting and completing her PhD and accepting the nomination as head of the School of Music at UWA.



# *Margaret Seares*

However, the most dramatic career decision to date was deciding to move from one sector to another.

*Why did I choose to leave what is a very comfortable environment and come where I had no idea how it would turn out? I guess it was just a challenge, to see what it was like, to see if I could do it.*

## **OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

Her role as chair of the Ministerial Arts Advisory Board meant Margaret had established links with the arts community and a knowledge of arts policy in government prior to taking her secondment opportunity as Executive Director.

She was clear that her contribution would be short term with a commitment to achieving some specific outcomes. Preparing the six arts portfolio agencies to amalgamate into one department was the most significant. Margaret is strongly committed to a consensus style of management, and of dealing with the arts community. She acknowledges and appreciates the contribution her mentors have made to the way she deals with people and makes decisions.

*My father was a very strong figure in my life. He was a businessman but had a highly ethical view on life, very strong principles. I think they have increasingly been important to me to ultimately make decisions based on*

*principles and not upon what is going to be politically the best way to jump. At the University, Sir Frank Callaway was a very strong mentor for me and he was a very good example of a consensus style head of department. What I think I learned from him and his successor, David Tunley, is the importance of trying to keep consensus and respect of what everyone was doing uppermost in your mind. In latter years I have worked closely with Fay Gale, so she, to me, was a female role model.*

Margaret's contribution to the State public service has been brief but influential. She is to be congratulated on her recent appointment to Chair of the Australia Council.

*“Why did I choose to leave what is a very comfortable environment and come where I had no idea how it would turn out? I guess it was just a challenge, to see what it was like, to see if I could do it.”*

**Jan Stewart** *was appointed to the position of CEO at the Lotteries Commission in 1992.*

*Name:*  
**Jan Stewart**

*Position:*  
**Chief Executive Officer**

*Organisation:*  
**Lotteries Commission**

*Qualifications:*  
**Master of Social Work,  
Bachelor of Arts**



## **CAREER HISTORY**

Jan commenced her career as a social worker on a cadetship to Graylands Hospital, a major psychiatric hospital in the 70s. A leadership challenge presented itself early in her career when her supervisor went on long service leave. As the most senior qualified social worker, she was left in charge of twenty staff, some with more than 30 years of experience. Jan recalls:

*I think they all regarded me sort of affectionately and didn't give me too much trouble, but they could have made my life a misery and they didn't. That was the beginning.*

At the conclusion of her cadetship, she took a position as a social worker at Princess Margaret Hospital. Her association with the hospital concluded in 1985 when she resigned following the birth of her first child. She had in this time attained the position of Chief Social Worker with responsibility for the hospital's social work department.

Jan remembers this as:

*...a tremendously emotional decision. I was totally committed to that job. It meant an enormous amount to me. I was very involved with the hospital and the patients but I worked very long hours.*

In 1987, Jan commenced her association with the Lotteries Commission as a part-time consultant. This was a period of growth and opportunity. By 1990, she had attained the position of Director of Community Funding, working part-time (4 days a week). This flexibility allowed Jan to participate in the early childhood development of her children.

*I did this incredible juggling. I was working incredibly long hours and I always had Friday off. I would take the kids to playgroup and kindy, gym, swimming and all those early childhood things.*

# *Jan Stewart*

Returning to full-time paid work in 1990, Jan continued in her Director's role. In 1992, she was asked by the Board to take on the role of Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Lotteries Commission. Initially, Jan perceived herself in the role of caretaker until the appointment of a new CEO. Over time, she began to appreciate that she would really like the job. When the job remained unfilled after the initial recruitment and selection process, she elected to apply for the position. Jan was appointed to the position substantively in 1992. Since her appointment Jan has overseen the growth of Lotteries sales to record levels with Lotto sales per capita in 1997 the highest in the world. This has enabled the Commission to return equally record funding to the community in Western Australia with the development of funding programs which now impact across almost all the community.

### **OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

Recurrent themes throughout Jan's career include:

- synchronicity and risk taking – when opportunities present themselves, often unsolicited, she has taken them.
- recognition of her skills and competencies by significant others who have then placed their faith in her to achieve the desired outcomes.
- initiative and participation – involvement in new developments such as the establishment of one of the first Child Sexual Abuse Units in Western Australia, more recently in the development of the Lotteries business and new funding programs as well as participation on boards, tribunals and community groups.

**Cheryl Vardon** *is the most senior woman in the Western Australian public service.*

*Name:*  
**Cheryl Vardon**

*Position:*  
**Director-General**

*Organisation:*  
**Education Department of Western Australia**

*Qualifications:*  
**Bachelor of Arts  
Diploma of Teaching  
Fellow of Australia College of Education  
Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management**



### **CAREER HISTORY**

Cheryl Vardon took up the position of Director-General of the Education Department in July 1996. She is a respected educator with diverse and successful experience in senior management and public administration in South Australia, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

Recognition of the importance of developing strong links to community, business and industry groups has been a feature of Cheryl's leadership in these positions.

She has chaired committees at national level on behalf of Ministers of Education, and has been a member of numerous Boards and University Councils and senates.

Cheryl has a particularly strong commitment to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students as well as to Aboriginal reconciliation and racial harmony. In November 1998 she was honoured with a national award, the Australian Reconciliation Award, for her role in promoting Aboriginal reconciliation in Western Australian government schools.

### **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

With a clear sense of self, a strong interest in human services and the community, Cheryl has always been attracted to a public, rather than private sector career. She has relished challenges and been open to opportunities as they present themselves. From each experience she has acquired insight and knowledge.

Moving out of her comfort zone is something Cheryl thrives on. A willingness to be mobile led to a definitive experience as an Executive Director in Correctional Services in South Australia.

*I learnt a lot then about human behaviour, about evil and good, good and evil. I've learned about how we treat people who've done things society doesn't approve of and the narrow line between being in prison and not. That's taught me about knowing where priorities are and not trying to please everybody because you're not going to. So you have to be quite clear on priorities, and priorities have got to be based on values.*

Considered risk-taking possibly best describes Cheryl's approach to new opportunities.

# *Cheryl Vardon*

*It's risk taking with a back-up of knowledge and caution. You don't leap into a black hole and think 'this could be fun'. Stay calm about it all. I worked out many years ago what were the worst things that could ever happen to me and it's nothing to do with work.*

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Calm and pragmatic
- Considered risk taker
- Astute and politically aware
- Strong sense of self and her spirituality
- Fearless and shrewd
- A networker

## ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS

*I've not necessarily had mentors. I've watched, I've dissected the behaviour of senior people I respect around the place and worked out, not consciously, probably unconsciously, worked out why they are successful in some areas and not successful in other areas. So it is taking a bit from all the people that you respect.*

Cheryl sees a role for senior executives

*Senior men and women in the public sector have a responsibility to mentor Aboriginal men and women.*

## ADVICE

*Do not seek to join so called political "inner circles" or "power groups". They are toxic to the notion of service to the community. Stay apart. After a while people will turn to you and coalesce to form healthy supportive teams.*

*When you have power in a position, then use it. While there is no need to imitate the testosterone/heart attack style of leadership, do not wimp out.*

*People want to be managed by someone who is strong and competent, has a vision and knows what to do. Deal with the disgruntled. Do not "accommodate" people where behaviour is bad. Encourage those who are creative, positive and who use their initiative and encourage others.*

***"If the best women are not encouraged to take senior leadership positions in the public service along with the best men, then the service becomes a residual one, not choosing from the top talent available.***

***A public service with only men in the senior levels is simply not providing a range of excellence in leadership to the community."***

## THE CHALLENGE AHEAD:

*If the best women are not encouraged to take senior leadership positions in the public service along with the best men, then the service becomes a residual one, not choosing from the top talent available.*

*A public service with only men in the senior levels is simply not providing a range of excellence in leadership to the community.*

*I see the most talented women, and some of the most talented men, opting out to seek community service careers elsewhere, in small business and in consultancy.*

*To return the public service to the highest possible level of leadership and community service the most talented and creative men and women must be drawn back to it in equal numbers. This is our challenge.*

**June Williams** *is the first Equal Opportunity Commissioner appointed in Western Australia.*

*Name:*  
**June Williams**

*Position:*  
**Western Australian  
Commissioner for Equal  
Opportunity**

*Organisation:*  
**Equal Opportunity  
Commission**



### **CAREER HISTORY**

June's involvement with equity issues began in the early 70's when she became 'radically politicised in the women's movement'. She joined the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), a group established to achieve pay equity and equal rights for women.

*I just figured that until women were paid properly for working then nothing else was ever going to be right. You were never going to have proper childcare. You were never going to have decent educational opportunities. You were never going to get any of those other changes until the value of women's work was recognised, so I put all my efforts into pay/equity questions. That meant coming to terms with the way in which the industrial system worked, and awards and unions and I just went through this enormously fast learning curve on all of these issues that I'd never been exposed to before.*

Initially trained as a teacher, June resigned after teaching out the period bonded to the government.

*I puddled around doing all sorts of funny things when I left teaching: negotiating options on shares and being a personnel officer in Myers. Then I got married and went to Sydney. I went back to teaching again because nobody was prepared to employ you if you were a recently-married woman because they expected you would leave the workforce and have babies. They weren't prepared to invest any time or effort in you.*

She joined Medibank when it was newly-formed at half her previous pay, but within a year had doubled her salary and was appointed Parliamentary and Ministerial Liaison Officer. She was subsequently appointed as a conciliation officer to the newly formed NSW Anti-Discrimination Board, she stayed seven years "I had a great time. You made it up as you went along because there was no case law, there was

*June Williams*

*“I guess if I’ve got advice for younger women it is to break out of where you are and pick an industry or area that is new or growing, because that is where the opportunities are.”*

no precedence, there was nothing.” From there, she moved to the NSW Premier’s Department as an EEO Co-ordinator.

*Gerry Gleeson was secretary of the Premier’s Department and Gerry is widely recognised to this day as one of the most competent bureaucrats. He was a very clever operator and I learned a great deal from him on how to operate as a bureaucrat in the public service.*

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

June’s experiences with WEL as a lobbyist, along with her work in a newly formed bureaucracy provided her with the foundation of many of the skills, knowledge and competencies that she relies on today. These include: networking; knowing what you’re talking about; getting and paying for good advice; media liaison; budgetary matters; and the relationships between bureaucracies.

A recurrent theme throughout June’s career has been her attraction to new areas and emerging issues.

A major turning point in June’s life that resulted in her moving to WA was the death of her husband.

*I’ll tell you how I got here. My husband dropped dead on a squash court when my son was five. That really put me under the hammer in terms of having a decent career and earning decent money. He died in September, and this job was advertised in December and I was here by May. I just upped and moved.*

Personal qualities that have facilitated her success:

- Networking
- Politically astute and perceptive
- Risk taker enjoying new challenges
- Knowledgeable
- Tenacious

## ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS

Mentoring has been an informal matter in

June’s career. She says she has learnt her skills and abilities through working alongside people, especially during her politically active days in the 70s.

*We were all doing ground-breaking stuff, and the skills that people brought to the tasks were invaluable. There was never any jealousy or holding back from sharing your knowledge or special skills. It was a great privilege to be involved in that, it was a special time.*

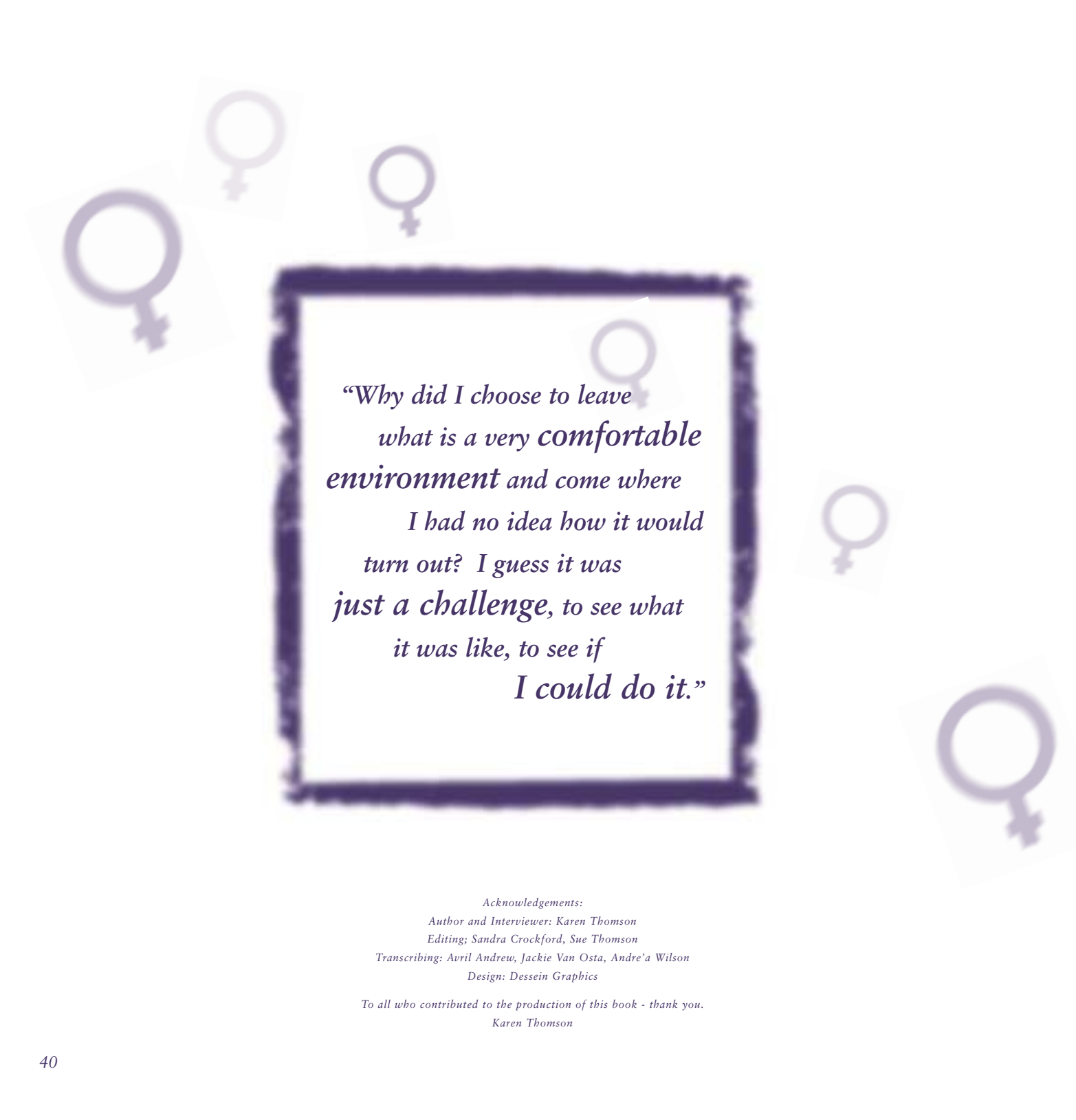
## ADVICE

*I guess if I’ve got advice for younger women it is to break out of where you are and pick an industry or area that is new or growing, because that is where the opportunities are.*

June advises to learn by observing others and to be credible “know what you’re talking about.”

Also suggest solutions to work difficulties, rather than just illuminating problems.

*If your pushing for something, or don’t like something, don’t just whinge or complain about it. You’ve got to put together a comprehensive package, that says this problem or policy shouldn’t be happening and this is what you need to do about it.*



*“Why did I choose to leave  
what is a very comfortable  
environment and come where  
I had no idea how it would  
turn out? I guess it was  
just a challenge, to see what  
it was like, to see if  
I could do it.”*

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*Karen Thomson*