

POLICY FORUM

POD

Policy Forum Pod
Women in politics and policy
Episode 96
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About us:

Policy Forum Pod is the podcast of Policy Forum.net - Asia and the Pacific's platform for public policy debate, analysis and discussion. Policy Forum is based at Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University.

Our regular podcasts are written for a broad audience of public policy professionals, and those interested in public policy throughout the region.

Policy Forum connects with the Asia and the Pacific Policy Society – a network of thousands of people involved in every level of policy around the region.

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Caitlin Figueiredo: Founder, Jasiri

[intro music 0:00:00-0:00:11]

Presenter: Welcome to Policy Forum Pod – the podcast for those who want to dig a little deeper into the policy challenges facing Australia and its region. I am Julia Ahrens. Policy Forum Pod is produced at Crawford School, the region's leading graduate policy school. You can find out more about us at crawfordschool.anu.edu.au.

Today, I am joined by two fantastic co-presenters. We have got Professor Sharon Bessell. Sharon is a Professor here, at Crawford School, and also the ANU lead on the Individual Deprivation Measure [Project]. She also edits Policy Forum's Poverty in Focus section. Sharon, do you think we will hear some poetry about women in policy today?

Prof Bessell: I am really hoping for some poetry on anything today. It was very disappointing to have John on the Pod last week – a poet and a sociologist – and have no poetry. Today may be the day.

Presenter: It might be, so I think we can keep our hopes up there.

We also have Sally-Anne Henfry today, the Executive Director at the Sir Roland Wilson Foundation. She was previously the Deputy Chief of Staff and Special Adviser at the Global Partnership for Education in Washington D.C., and she has worked across many policy areas, such as public education provision, gender equality, women's empowerment, and health systems in developing countries, so this podcast will be right up your alley. It is also your Pod debut. Have you mentally prepared for this?

Sally-Anne Henfry: I have. I hope I am prepared, but what an honour and privilege it is to be part of this podcast and to be co-presenting with Professor Bessell.

Presenter: I am sure it will be great fun.

Most of our listeners will know that we each week discuss some of the most pressing policy issues, so perhaps I will start with you, Sally-Anne. What has caught your attention over the last week?

Sally-Anne Henfry: A-ha! There has been so much in the news, from the slow burn that is Brexit, to the US Presidential race, to the tragic airline carnage that we have seen, but what has actually caught my eye is this new soap-opera, called *The Heights*, which is airing on ABC, which is purported to be Australia's first genuinely diverse soap-opera. I am really interested to watch

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that and to find out whether it really is going to revolutionise the genre and break down stereotypes.

Presenter: Well, it sounds really fascinating. It sounds like a very positive and great promise. Let's see whether the script actually plays out the way we hope.

Sally-Anne Henfry: Let's hope.

Prof Bessell: I have been watching the ads for that, Sally-Anne, and it does look terrific, I have got to say. I think it is actually already airing but I have not managed to see an episode. It does look fantastic so, listeners, watch *The Heights* and tell us what you think.

I feel now that I am completely disconnected from popular culture, because it is far more exciting to look at a new soap-opera than to look at the train wreck that is Brexit, but it is like watching something awful unfolding and you just cannot take your eyes away from it and that is what I have been feeling about Brexit.

This week and this morning, we saw once again Theresa May lose the vote in Parliament, and the speech that she gave afterwards – I was listening to it on the radio, her voice was just the voice of devastation. I mean, I do not want to overplay this, but you could hear the pressure seemingly close to breaking point in her voice and, whatever one thinks of Theresa May, the pressure that she must be under and the burden that she has carried around Brexit is just incredible.

It keeps striking me that she was someone who was not in favour of Brexit, who was part of the stay campaign, but has taken on this burden of trying to somehow navigate her way through the mess. David Cameron – not sure where David Cameron is. Nigel Farage – I remember a comment made by Nigel Farage after the vote, where he said, "What else could I do?" Well, he could have stayed around and helped to solve the mess. Yes, Brexit continues to unfold.

Presenter: Yes, you are definitely right there, and Theresa May has really embarked on a very arduous journey here.

Thank you, Sharon and Sally-Anne, for sharing your ideas. What has grabbed my attention this week is not really a policy issue, but it is a fantastic podcast. It is *The Familiar Strange*, which I would like to give a bit of a plug to.

The Familiar Strange is a blog and it is a podcast, and it is based here, at the ANU. Two weeks ago, the team spoke to the very inspiring Professor Genevieve Bell, who is the Director of the

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Autonomy Agency and Assurance Institute. In that episode, they built a bridge between anthropology, science and technology, and they talked about a really, really broad range of topics, from technologies from 40,000 years ago to fieldwork and large corporations. It's a brilliant pod series and well worth a listen. The pod comes out every Monday and you can find it on the Familiar Strange.com, SoundCloud or iTunes, and we will leave a link for you in the show notes so, listeners, go and check it out.

Before we get going with the Pod, I would like to also invite you to join our podcast squad on Facebook. In this group, you can get your eyes on some exclusive photos and videos from behind the scenes, and we can get our hands on your ideas for future podcasts. As a bonus, you can also get in touch with other listeners from all over the globe and chat to our presenters. You can find us on Facebook – just type in Policy Forum Pod into the search bar.

Today on the Pod, we want to have a look at women in politics and policy. Last week marked International Women's Day and, with it, came an outpouring of inspiring stories, admiration on social media for the female heroes in our families, communities, leadership and politics, but also we heard Australia's Prime Minister, Scott Morrison's, speech to the Chamber of Minerals and Energy in Western Australia, where he said, "We want to see women rise. But we don't want to see women rise only on the basis of others doing worse." Well, thanks for that, Scott Morrison.

Today, we want to ask: why should we care about gender balance? What are some of the hurdles that women are facing trying to enter senior politics and policy positions, and what would policy and politics look like if we had the same proportion of women in high-ranking positions as we currently have men? So, who have we got on board for this today, Sharon?

Prof Bessell: We have got a fantastic line-up of guests, as always, but this is a particularly well-informed and inspiring panel.

We have Professor Kim Rubenstein, who is Professor of Law here, at the ANU's College of Law. Kim's areas of expertise are administrative law, constitutional law, human rights, and law and gender. She was a consultant to the Commonwealth in drafting the Australian Citizenship Legislation, and Kim had a lot to say during the discussion, the debates in the exit of Parliamentarians around that particular part of our Constitution that has something to say about people's allegiance if they're going to sit in Parliament. Some people probably saw Kim on Q&A as part of that, and she was fabulous. She is also the inaugural Convenor of the ANU Gender Institute.

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Helen Machalias is Director of Communications, Advocacy and Fundraising at the YWCA – the Young Women's Christian Association. She has worked for the NSW Government as a senior adviser on fine arts and culture policy, and Helen is deeply committed to issues around gender equality and social justice, so a great person to have talking about these issues.

Our third speaker is Caitlin Figueiredo. Caitlin is founder of Jasiri Australia – an organisation that provides self-defence and leadership skills. Caitlin is a global gender equality activist. She was the ACT Young Australian of the Year in 2018. She is a Task Force Member of the UN Agency Network on Youth Development's working group on youth and gender equality, and Caitlin has been recognised on the Forbes under 30s list for her work on parliamentary gender equality through the Girls Takeover Parliament program. Caitlin has an incredible work range and wealth of experience to bring to our conversation.

We were also going to have our very own Helen Sullivan, Professor of Public Policy and Director of Crawford, on the Pod today but, unfortunately, she is not well. We hope you are feeling better soon, Helen, and we will talk to Helen another time on these issues.

Presenter: A quick reminder to our listeners before we get started, to get in touch on Facebook, where we are [policyforumpod](#), on Twitter, where we are [@APPSPolicyForum](#), or shoot us an email at podcast@policyforum.net. Also, stick around after the main interview, because we will be going over some of your questions and comments and, also, suggestions for future podcasts.

For now, let's hand over to Sharon and Sally-Anne for the main interview.

[music interlude 0:09:21-0:09:26]

Prof Bessell: Kim, welcome to the Pod.

Prof Rubenstein: Thank you, Sharon.

Prof Bessell: And, Caitlin, it is good to have you here.

Caitlin Figueiredo: Thanks so much.

Prof Bessell: And, Helen, welcome.

Helen Machalias: Thank you. Good to be with you.

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Prof Bessell: We are starting with some slightly depressing news. According to the World Economic Forum's 2018 Global Gender Gap Report, the proportion of women in the workplace is stagnating and the representation in politics is falling. Against the backdrop of Scott Morrison's very recent comments on International Women's Day that men should not have to make way for women in parliament, I would like to ask to each of you to start with: why should we care about gender equality? Kim, I am sure you have some good reasons.

Prof Rubenstein: Well, I think we want to care about anything to do with diversity in leadership, and gender obviously is one aspect of diversity that is really important. There may be a range of different perspectives in relation to the group 'women', but no matter what that range is each of those women have an undeniable reality that their life experience is as a woman in society and that that has an impact on the way they live and experience the world, and if we are thinking about representation then that has to be part of our concept of democratic participation or representation.

Prof Bessell: Caitlin, you are nodding in agreement.

Caitlin Figueiredo: Yes, I think this is one of my favourite topics. I would have to echo in Kim's statements. Diversity creates better policies, it creates stronger economies, it creates stronger communities. We have seen, through the McKinsey Report that was released last year, that companies which had more diversity were 21 percent more likely to achieve better outcomes overall than companies that did not.

That is in democracy, as well. We live in a representative democracy. We need everyone at the table because you cannot just have policies created by certain men or certain demographic, which only have certain level of experiences. You need everyone to bring their different life experiences and their different perspectives.

Prof Bessell: Helen, what are your thoughts [crosstalk 0:11:30]?

Helen Machalias: Yes, it is a bit of an echo [unclear 0:11:31] here but, yes, a representative government is important, and women have an equal right to participate in democratic governance.

The work that I do at YWCA Canberra we are looking at various policy issues at the moment around women's superannuation or the number of old women who are being trapped in homelessness, and we look at those things and think actually the seeds of those in the policy sense

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were seen a long time ago, probably when there were less women around the table. And so, unless we have more women participating in politics, we will not have that gender lens on civic issues, which is so important.

Prof Bessell: Helen, just to stay with you for a moment, you work with women across the spectrum, including young women. I am wondering what your reaction was to Scott Morrison's comments and, I guess, the message that sends to everyone but particularly to young women who might be aspiring for leadership.

Helen Machalias: Yes, it was appalling. I mean, the Liberal Government have formed on this, I think. Scott Morrison's comments were really [?? 0:12:32], but then we remember Joy Hockey's comments on Mother's Day, where he took away the Baby Bonus and accused mothers who are accessing their legal Paid Parental Leave scheme entitlements and called them double-dippers, so nothing should really surprise us, but this did.

In terms of what it communicates, I think it is a really poor reflection of the Liberal Party's position [?? 0:13:00] while you've got someone at the head of the party espousing those kinds of sentiments. It is not surprising they are struggling to attract and retain female candidates, and we know that young women notice these things and it has an impact on their aspirations.

There was a very good Plan International survey a couple of years ago that came out, that said that young women in the 10 to 14 age-gap only two percent of them identified politics as a future career option and, by the time they looked at the 18 to 25 cohort, it dropped to zero percent. Young women who are, I think, very engaged in social issues care deeply about the world, are obviously picking up signals in terms of the public debate and going, "Actually, I don't know if representative politics is for me if this is what's on offer."

Prof Rubenstein: Can I say, also, the language is interesting, isn't it: "make way for women", because it actually reflects a conception of the existing framework that is part of the problem. I think it was really mirroring that notion that here is a system, we are not going to necessarily make way, as opposed to thinking, "Well, what is it about the system that has led to this reality of the dominance?" of a particular either gender or even beyond gender in terms of the nature of the type of person who is attracted to politics — that concept of making way for others is about a norm of power that does not think about diversity in a more holistic sense.

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I think that language is also just rather depressing in terms of these issues have been around for so long and then those in power are not really receptive to the more fundamental structural issues that are playing.

Prof Bessell: And the problems are not isolated to Australia. If we look globally, we have similar kinds of problems playing out. The World Economic Forum's report also shows that there are only 34% of women in leadership roles globally. That is pretty disturbing and, obviously, it is much worse in some parts of the world. In Australia's public service, for example, amongst the 22 departmental secretaries, there are only eight women.

Kim, coming back to the point that you were making about the structural issues, what do you think is going on here beyond politics?

Prof Rubenstein: Well, I guess one thing – that figure that you just said of eight actually was not what I was expecting you to say. I thought it was going to be even lower than that, so that says something also about the framework. Eight is actually quite remarkable historically, so that is perhaps a step forward on one level, but it does also then reinforce how poor the playing field has been, that I actually responded thinking that it was actually quite a good number.

I think, again, it is that sort of structural notion of what are the expectations in the public sphere of what an ideal leader, an ideal decision-maker looks like. I do not know the names of those eight people, those eight women who are in those positions, but it would be really interesting, wouldn't it, to think through what the expectations are of them when they take on the role.

Are they meant to just act like the men act in those positions or have they had the freedom, really, to be able to create a new sense of what it means to be a secretary of a department? Again, that links back to that notion of making way for women, because it is also about making way for a different style of leadership that, again, I do not think is part of current leadership thinking processes.

Prof Bessell: Caitlin, you play a strong leadership role in the many roles that you play. I am interested in hearing your perspectives about the challenges that you see across the number of roles that you play, that are there particularly for young women. We have already touched on those messages that go to young women through comments like those that the Prime Minister recently made, but what do you think the challenges are for young women and where are the opportunities?

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Caitlin Figueiredo: I think I just want to touch back on what the Prime Minister said. I actually run a program called Girls Takeover Parliament. I actually co-wrote that report with Plan International released in 2017, and we found some shocking statistics, that young women say they do not believe they have access to--; 50 percent of them say that they do not have access to leadership positions based on their gender.

They also say that the biggest barriers are media and how they are framed in the media, and the negative perceptions and the bullying, because obviously we have seen that in the past year horrifically in terms of politics, especially around Julia Banks, Julie Bishop, and so on, and we have also--;

They also say that playing house roles and the unequal role and their roles in the house is a huge contributing factor. I have seen this picture on social media recently, which shows women and men are at a starting line for a race and men just have – I think everyone has seen this, men have absolutely nothing in front of them, just the finish line, whereas women – they had children, they had housework, they had their own work, so it was like multiple different barriers that they had to overcome.

Young women notice this. Going back to structural inequalities, the Prime Minister upheld that recently, saying that we do not have to give way to women because that is going to be unfair to men. That is just upholding the notion that men are the leaders, that they are the only ones who have merits enough to be in those positions, therefore they do not want to lose any of their power. Instead, they just want to make a little bit of room, so that we can fit into that.

I think that is sending a really negative message to young people, especially young women who go, "Well, there are so many issues that we are facing. We are trying our hardest to get there. We are trying to open up new spaces." We are creating new programs like Girls Takeover Parliament, so we can create those spaces but, still, once you get to the top levels that is when there is absolutely no breathing room.

I also think that things are changing. For example, if Girls Takeover Parliament was to happen, say, five, ten years ago, there would be no way we would have had the success that we have had. We are now in four different countries around the Pacific. We have governments coming to us, telling, asking us can we please partner with them, so we are starting to see a change in demographic, but I do not think it is happening fast enough. I think that there needs to be a

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discussion of how we can work together, both at the top legislatures and also on the grassroots, to create new partnerships and new opportunities.

Prof Bessell: Helen, what do you see from where you are sitting at YMCA? Do you see those changes happening in a positive way and do you have a sense of optimism?

[crosstalk and laughter]

Helen Machalias: I do have a sense of optimism. I think it is much more a part of the public conversation these days. That is really positive to see.

Going back to Caitlin's point around childcare and caring responsibilities, I think it is really scary that, even in families where women are the primary bread winners, they still do a greater proportion of housework and childcare, so I think things like that need to be part of the conversation.

I think women are definitely more aware, I think men are certainly more aware and I am hopeful that the younger generation who are growing up around these conversations will implement it in their workplaces and in their home lives, as well.

Sally-Anne Henfry: From Kelly O'Dwyer, to Jane Hume, to Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, we have seen so many women quitting politics. Across Australia's whole Parliament, the percentage of women is just 32 percent. Caitlin, you are the co-founder of Girls Takeover Parliament, a movement to help Australian young women and girls have political voice. Why is it so difficult for women to enter and then be successful in politics?

Caitlin Figueiredo: I think there is a number of reasons. Going back to, first of all, the perception of what makes a successful politician, generally, when you ask the general public, it would be a successful politician is male, middle-aged, upper-aged, Caucasian, comes from an educated background, has probably two kids, a family, very heteronormative--; there is like a perfect [?? 0:21:30] position, and women are not necessarily considered to be politicians. That is because, for generations, masculine qualities are what make up leadership, and so I think first you have got to overcome that perception of what makes a good leader.

Julie Bishop, who was talking about this recently, she said that we need more women in politics because they bring a transformational leadership, they have different leadership qualities, they think differently, and that is true. We do not like to often see men and women as different, but it

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is true: we think more community-based, we can approach different problems in different ways, so we bring something different to the table.

But I think one of the biggest problems that we have seen is bullying and sexual harassment within the workplace, in particular in politics. There is no set of standards of rules that are currently happening on the House to prevent bullying and, despite the Prime Minister telling that we support women, we champion them, that is just not the case.

I think we have seen this with young women, as well. With our program, for example, we have seen a massive divide in terms of who is politically engaged, who is willing to support young women and who is not. Predominantly, it is mostly, 90 percent of the Greens, who want to apply who support and champion young participants during the program and after. We see a lot of Labor participants, a lot of Independents, and it is very difficult to get any of the Liberal members.

We have seen a few. Julie Bishop was really fantastic, and she championed that program. Julia Banks, before she resigned, she was a part of our Program, as well. We have had some really great champions, but I think there is not enough willingness to support women in conservative parties and that is something that we really need to start discussing.

Sally-Anne Henfry: Professor Rubenstein, what do you think are the consequences of having so many more men in politics than women?

Prof Rubenstein: I guess to answer that, I think, we also need to unpack what we think a parliament should look like. If we think in terms of representative democracy, of representing the people, well given that there is a disproportion number of men in Parliament than the numbers of them in society, then you are getting a skewed notion of representation. That is one of the significant problems.

I think another aspect in rethinking representation is about thinking the way we do representation. One of the areas of research that I have been working on is thinking through – as a result, actually, of a case in the United Kingdom – notion of shared representation, where two people could actually jointly be a representative for an area.

There were two women in the UK who tried to do that – unsuccessfully by virtue of the legislative framework, but it got me thinking, too, that these broader notions that a parliament attracts a certain type of person who has the capacity to fly in and out in the ways that they do in our federal country and be away from family for significant periods of time.

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Where caring fit into the equation means that you are getting a certain type of person who has all that work done for them, which means that they are not really knowledgeable or capable of thinking through what the policy implications are on a range of things, because their life is so different to so many people. I think that problem of having a certain type of life experience only represented in parliament means that you are not going to get the types of policies and legislation that you need to better support the needs of the community as a whole.

I think it is a really creative idea that comes from the UK of thinking through shared representation. I might add, that the two people that tried to be a joint member as a representative, one of them was a single mum. The other was a woman who had a particular disability where she needed to sleep a certain number of hours per day, so she could not work a full-time job, and so the two of them together had joined forces, to say, "Well, we will jointly represent--; nominate to represent this particular area."

I think it is a really creative thought because it would also encourage men to be thinking about the fact that, when they are representative, they also have other roles to play in society in terms of care for children, care for parents or just other forms of interaction with society that is not only about parliament. I think those are a few things.

Prof Bessell: I think that is such a fantastic example of the way in which we can rethink the structures that are either inclusive or exclusive and, as you say, bring more diversity to parliament.

I wanted to perhaps play the devil's advocate a little bit and pick up on the issue of what female leaders, female parliamentarians might bring to the parliament, particularly around issues of standards of behaviour and bullying. We see often two arguments from all women in parliament. One is around diversity and one is that it will lead to, perhaps, a more civilised, perhaps a kinder and caring approach to politics, and on that second issue I just wonder whether that is necessarily the case.

We have seen some high-profile examples of women engaging in bullying other women, some cases allegations of women bullying men. Is this the argument that we should be putting forward, that those bad behaviours of bullying, of inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with if women are there or is it the case that women also sometimes engage in bad behaviour? Helen [*what are you thinking?* crosstalk and laughter 0:27:11]?

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Helen Machalias: I, personally, do not think it is the argument that should be at the forefront of why we need more women in politics. We need to be careful about allocating the upholding of moral standards to women all the time and [?? 0:27:29] women's work.

As you point out, the fact that somebody is a female parliamentarian does not necessarily mean that they will be displaying a higher standard of behaviour or, indeed, advancing gender equality. If we think about Margaret Thatcher or, closer to home, the former Minister for Women, Michaelia Cash, you would not call them exactly standard bearers for gender equality.

I think the argument should come back to the fundamentals that women have a right to be equally represented, but also what it brings to the policy space, and there is plenty of great research that shows that, when you have more female parliamentarians, the policies are more female friendly, they are more progressive, they are more family-friendly. I think that is where the argument should be made.

Prof Rubenstein: I think that we also need to unpack power a bit, because it is really about how power is represented in society and that, often, when women do take on those roles, we have not had that much role modelling of power being played out in a different way than it has traditionally been presented by the men that have held those roles.

That is where I think the notion of diversity is really important, and reinforcing that diversity is not just about different faces being in the room but different ways of actually representing power, and to unpack how each person in society exercises their own power. I think parliament is like the apex of that representation, but we can go down to universities and people who take on roles of power in universities – whether they are male or female they often replicate traditional notions of how power is exercised, and it does not matter if it is a man or a woman, it is just that exercise of power can lead to an imbalance of power that leads to these unhealthy relationships.

I think a lot more work has to be done broadly about what we, as human beings, should be thinking about all the time whenever we exercise power, whether it be with our colleagues, within family relationships or, indeed, in those broader structural terms.

Prof Bessell: Caitlin, how do you see those issues playing out when you have got young girls or young women engaging in some of the debates around parliament through your program?

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Caitlin Figueiredo: Yes, I think it is a really interesting concept of do we want more women in politics to represent women? Is that their only role? It talks about the idea of, well, does men automatically--; are they are able to represent everyone? Is that--; Is there a divide?

That is what we are starting to see a lot with young women. One young woman came to me last year, just before the Federal takeover, and she was like, "Look, Caitlin, I really want to run for office one day, but the problem is I do not see that there is a place for me. I do not see any party really wanting to champion me, but even if I want to--; Even if I do manage to get into politics, that is not really the issue. It's, then, how do I get to the senior levels of politics?"

Because we have got a problem of getting women into politics, then it is the senior women in politics, and then they are talking if you are a mum and you have young kids, we have only had one Cabinet Minister ever and she has now left, because she wants to have a third child and that is really difficult. And so, it is the idea of going back to power of where is women's power in politics?

Where are we allowed to be placed? Are we there just for ticking boxes to make one party look a bit more progressive than the other, look a little bit more equal than the other or do we actually meaningfully want them included? Do we value their insights, and their ideas, and their differences, and their capacity to be legislative changemakers? If that is the case, then how will be able to get more women to the frontbench? How can they be ministers and how can we change the system to make it a little bit more inclusive, to make sure that it is a bit more balanced?

That is something that we, with Girls Takeover Parliament, talk about what politician quite regularly, especially the female ministers and shadow ministers there. For example, we speak a lot to Claire O'Neal. She is a Shadow Minister. She is still in a caring role, but she takes on a lot of responsibilities from Bill Shorten when he is away, and I feel like she is an up and coming. She is also a young mum with two young kids.

I remember the first time we spoke to her, she said she just had her little son – he was about six or seven months old. She brought him to Parliament and she was like, "I do not have enough room for him but I have to bring him to work, and I have put--; and we have had to essentially take one of the office spaces for his room, so it means I am one staffer down--; down less room, and it is relay hard to juggle."

She also said that, when she speaks to young women, none of them specifically go out and say that they want to be politicians, because as soon as they say that they are crucified by their parties

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and by men around them, whereas if men do that it is considered he is ambitious and that he is going to most likely get into those leadership positions. We have got to look at how are we talking about politics, where are women's roles in politics after they get in and how we can change the system to make it more equal.

Prof Bessell: When we are talking about creating more opportunities or shifting the structures of power so that women are able to enter leadership roles, one of the issues that comes up is quotas and, of course, this has been in the media recently given the particular predicament of the current government and the absence and departure of women amongst their ranks.

Since the 1990s, we have had these ongoing debates around gender quotas. Some parts of the world have adopted them, some parties have adopted them in various ways. Is it time to implement gender quotas more seriously within the Australian Parliament but, perhaps beyond Parliament, to company boards and other places where power is carried out? Kim, what [crosstalk 0:33:37] quotas?

Prof Rubenstein: Well, I have been championing a quota in relation to a move to a republic for some time. Back in the mid-1990s, when the move to a republic was on the agenda, I was going around the country saying that if we do move to a republic we should build into our constitutional change that the position of head of state alternate between men and women, so that whoever, no matter what system we finally choose to appoint a head of state, whether it would be by Parliament or by a direct election, that whoever wins the first or whoever is appointed as the first – let's use the word 'president', but it could be any term; head of state, then from that time on it would be mandated that it would have to alternate.

I think that that would be actually really important constitutional statement about equality of access to positions of power and it is also a reminder that, in any society, there are going to be multiple numbers of women who would be available and appropriate to be in any position of power, but let's just use the 'head of state', but they are often overlooked because they are not part of the normal gaze, and so that once you are forcing that gaze to look broader you would then see that there is a very broad pool within that group of women, so that diversity within women would be a necessary consequence of it actually mandating that framework.

I am a strong believer in quotas, and I think that it is a structural reminder that you need to have equal access to positions of power and participation, and that there will never ever be only one person who is the best person for the job in any context. I think once we recognise that then we

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also recognise that we need to broaden our gaze, and this is a very straightforward way of doing so.

Sally-Anne Henfry: We have chosen to have an all-female panel today because we were keen to hear from women on these issues, but what is men's role in all of this and what should they be doing to drive better policies for women? Helen?

Helen Machalias: Hmm, two things spring to mind. Going back to talking about how we get more women into leadership positions, particularly in politics, I think, generally speaking, it is the case that women will be mentored in the workplace and men will be championed. The distinction between those two being that, being mentored means you are getting advice from somebody, they are supporting you, whereas a champion is someone who will sit around a table and say, "Oh, Caitlin would be fabulous in such and such a role."

Particularly in politics, which does operate on a patronage system, I think it is really important for men to step up and play that role. I was quite concerned by some of what Karen Andrews was saying on Q&A on Monday, where she was saying because of the need to move men are worried about mentoring women or being seen to champion them. That would be a really sad and, I think, unnecessary by-product of the need to move, so that would be my number one.

Number two would be that men take a more active role in the home. That is on workplaces, as well. We know that men who seek flexible work often pay a very high career penalty [?? 0:37:04] – something that is not spoken about as much, but for as long as men are not able to play that role it means that women are less likely to aspire to leadership positions and they are also less likely to thrive when they get there, because their attention is constantly divided.

Sally-Anne Henfry: So, we have got a question from Paul Mugambi on our Facebook podcast group. He writes, "Many a times, women with disabilities are left out in policy development and implementation. To what extent or what measures can be taken to ensure the largest minority among women are recognised in policy forums?" Caitlin, maybe you want to tackle that one?

Caitlin Figueiredo: Yes, I think this is something that I look at quite often. I am the Vice-Chair of the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition. Our job is to, essentially, be representatives of young Australians, and that also includes young Australians with disabilities who are often shot out from the room and whose policies that are designed for them are not necessarily working for them or for their benefit.

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And so, I believe that we need to restructure how we create civic engagement and that is by ensuring that we have bipartisan or independent bodies that are there to work in partnership with policy makers and departments, so that they can be the ones do go and work on the ground and collect that data, do the facilitation so that we can bring minority voices who are never heard all the way up to the highest levels of office.

Prof Rubenstein: Can I just say there that measure that I mentioned before of shared representation also is, as I said, was instigated by someone with a disability, and I think it is about thinking through the exercise of power in a much broader way than it is traditionally undertaken, so that you can think of frameworks for women with disabilities to be involved that are not about mirroring what everyone else does.

Caitlin Figueiredo: Can I also say in that, I think we also need to look at, again, what is a politician and who are they, and who are the policy makers, because I feel like policy is often created by able-bodied people from very similar backgrounds, just like politicians, so we need to start reconceptualising that people with disabilities have every single right, and capacity, and capability to be the ones in the room to create the decisions.

We are looking at Senator Jordon Steele-John. He has come in. He is a young disabled Senator from Western Australia, who is proposing – I would not say radical, but I would say progressive – policies that are shifting the landscape in terms of the disability community and also for young people. I think that we need to, as a society, as a whole, recognise that the way and the people who have created our policies for centuries are not necessarily the best fit, and we need to start opening up new spaces, whether that is through quotas, or whether that is through targets, or if there is another system, to make sure that their voices are in the room.

Sally-Anne Henfry: Sounds like we are going to have to have a follow-up podcast on diversity and inclusion. We have had an extremely rich discussion so far. Just looking forward now, a question to all of you: what would an alternative reality look like, where there would be as many women as there are currently men in leadership positions?

Helen Machalias: Jennifer Nedelsky, who is a feminist philosopher and lawyer in Canada, I draw on her work for this piece that I have written about shared representation. She is talking about a changed norm, where everybody is expected to be a carer in some shape in society and that, if you are not, you are basically seen as being an unproductive member of society. I think that that

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vision of an expectation that, in your working day or your working week, it would just be seen as being below par if you were not taking on a caring responsibility in your day-to-day life.

In that sense, you would be judgemental in the normative sense of a male who spent all of his time doing one workplace--; being committed to one workplace in their day-to-day lives, and so that you would rethink society around care rather than rethinking society around the workplace. At the moment, as workers we fit our families around our workplace, but my vision would be that we would have that shift, that we were all focused on our relationships and our caring responsibilities to one another, and then work would fit around that. I think that would be a wonderful vision.

Prof Bessell: I am just going to have to leap in here with a small anecdote from some of my research. In all of the research that I have done over many years with children, the one resource that they value most is time with their parents and most often the one resource that they have least of is time with their parents – that is both mum and dad, and so I think that rethinking and reshaping of society to put all human relationships of centuries is really powerful and would make an enormous difference to women's lives, to children's lives and to men's lives, in positive ways.

Sally-Anne Henfry: What about you, Caitlin? What does your alternative reality look like?

Caitlin Figueiredo: I am an optimist, so I think my alternative reality would be you are looking at data. If the first thing that would happen was 12 trillion dollars would be added to our global GDP because of gender equality by 2025, that's a positive for conservatives, but for optimists like me it would be I would hope to see there would be a decrease in gender-based violence, first of all, because you would have policies created by women from women's experience, who understand the complex natures, and they all will be able to target it and reflect the policies that will be able to make a difference on the ground.

We would also see a difference in wars. Every single war in human history was created by men, so I think women would bring a different level of diplomacy to the table and would be able to negotiate and work differently. This is, I guess, my optimistic point of view, but this is what I have seen working with [?? 0:43:26]. Men are very combative, in a sense, and they are always pushing first an agenda, whereas women are more likely to talk, and discuss, and come up with compromising.

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I think we would see a more balanced world potentially in the future and, again, I would also see more diversity at the table, so not just looking at men and women, but I am talking about culturally diverse [?? 0:43:46] people. I would also see that women would want to champion, because I am seeing this on the ground – that women's movements are championing indigenous rights and sovereignty at far greater numbers than that of men.

I fundamentally believe that, if we can get more women in politics, we will be able to see more indigenous rights rise up and we would see that Uluru Statement from the Heart, if we had more women in politics, would be passed right away.

Sally-Anne Henfry: Helen, I wonder what I will hear from you.

Helen Machalias: Yes, it is not so much an alternative reality but a reality I would like to get back to. When Julia Gillard was the Prime Minister, a friend's son – I was chatting to him one day and I said, "Are you interested in going to politics? Do you want to be a Prime Minister?" and he said, "Oh, no, no, that's a girl's job," and I would really like to get back to that point.

[laughter]

Prof Bessell: That is fantastic. It would be nice to hear our current Prime Minister say, "Well, really, this is a girl's job. I'd like to hand it over."

[laughter]

As we wrap up, it is magic-wand time. I am going to ask each of you. If you had one piece of advice that you could give to policy-makers on how to make senior [?? 0:44:55] in policy and in politics more accessible to women, knowing that that piece of advice would be followed, what would that advice be? Kim?

Prof Rubenstein: Well, for me it is building on what I just said earlier in terms of their conscious thinking through their role in a caring framework, so that they would be changing their world view around what their responsibilities are in the home and in the community, as a way into thinking through shared representation.

Prof Bessell: Caitlin, what is your advice?

Caitlin Figueiredo: I think for me the biggest thing would be "listen to women" – actually take the time to listen and understand where they are coming from, listen to what they are dealing

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with and try and come up with solutions for that. Also, I would ask policy-makers to tackle and challenge their own biases, because that is something that is really holding women back from senior leadership positions. Listen and tackle own biases.

Prof Bessell: Helen?

Helen Machalias: I would say "identify talent in different ways" – similar to Caitlin. A lot of female candidates in politics report that all it took for them to run was being asked by somebody. If we were all on the lookout for amazing female talent and diverse talent and actually acted upon that, I think we would see a real shift.

Prof Bessell: It has been such a rich discussion today, so much for us to take away to think about, and such wise advice to end with. Thank you all to Kim, to Caitlin and to Helen. Thank you so much for your contributions and for your wisdom.

[collective 'thankyous']

[music interlude 0:46:24-0:46:32]

Presenter: Thank you Caitlin, Helen and Kim – what a great discussion. What really stood out for me was that, when Kim made a point about the gender quota actually being quite a positive thing about creating opportunities. This morning, when I checked my Instagram, I actually saw a post by someone who is a former study colleague of mine, and she went on to work as a parliamentarian in a local parliament in the town that I grew up in.

She said she does not wake up in the morning thinking, "I wish I wasn't in Parliament because of the quota." She thinks, "I'm glad that I am here, because I have got a chance to give women a voice and that this created opportunity was actually created for me," so I thought that was a really positive takeaway on the quota. What did you think, Sharon?

Prof Bessell: Yes, I think the conversation around quotas was so interesting. Like Kim, I am a big supporter of quotas. I think we could make the argument the quotas are unnecessary if we genuinely lived in a society when merit alone was enough to get you into parliament or to get you to wherever you want to be, but if you look at the Australian Parliament today and, particularly, at the Liberal Party where there really are serious issues about the representation of women, I find it very hard to say to myself, "Everyone of those men that is there is the best possible candidate and is there on his merit alone."

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I think we need quotas to create opportunity and as a corrective when we do not live in a perfect society of merit. I think Kim's points were really well made.

I think your friend, Julia – that is right, I do not think anyone wakes up saying, "I only got here because of the quotas," but people may wake up saying, "I wasn't able to make it because I am a woman," or, "I have a disability," or, "There is another structural barrier keeping me out of leadership roles." I think quotas are really important in shifting power structures.

Presenter: Also changing the narrative on that.

Prof Bessell: Yes, absolutely.

Presenter: What do you think, Sally-Anne?

Sally-Anne Henfry: Yes, I am glad that we were able to have a discussion about notions of power and different types of leadership, because quotas are very important in those structure mechanisms and tools that we can put in place, but challenging traditional notions of power is really critical, I think, as well in this discussion. Having created a space to have a conversation about different types of leadership and what women can bring to the table, I think, is really important. It was great to be able to speak about that today with the panel.

Then, the other thing that really struck me about the conversation was the importance of sharing the caring role. We are seeing more flexibility in the workplace, so that men and women can participate in flexible work practices, but it is so important that men take up that flexibility option, as well, and take on more of the caring role, so that women do have the opportunity to take on more leadership roles.

Prof Bessell: I think that is also about seeing it as an opportunity for men to take on other roles, for men to play caring roles, to have a bigger part in their children's lives or to look after aging parents, or whatever it is. It is not necessarily the case that care is always a burden. It is often a fantastic opportunity to have those human relationships. Framed slightly differently, it is about giving men those opportunities as well while opening up other types of opportunities for women. Yes, like you said, Sally-Anne, I thought that was a really powerful part of the conversation.

Presenter: I think we can all agree on that. You know now what we think about this week's podcast, but we would really love to hear what you thought of the discussion. We always love your feedback, and your questions, and your comments on our podcast, so please keep sending

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them in because each week at the end of the podcast we answer some of your questions and respond to what you have sent to us.

Let's start with last week's podcast, "*A Social Insecurity System*" with John Falzon, Bob Gregory and Sue Olney. In this episode, they delved deeper into the problems of punitive welfare systems, the caustic language that we hear when talking about job seekers and the role that labour policy placing creating sustainable solutions.

We have got a comment excerpt from Mark Zanker on our Policy Forum Pod group on Facebook, and this is really just in an excerpted way. He has written almost a whole essay, so definitely have a look at this great comment. He writes, "Also on the welfare front, it is ridiculous to expect remote Aboriginal communities to benefit from completely inappropriate employment programs. Anyone who has been in remote locations in northern Australia can work this out. We have destroyed traditional first nations culture, community and way of life and that is the real problem. Trying to force Eurocentric employment notions on these communities has always failed and always will. We are too far down the road now I think to turn it around although we should be doing everything we possibly can to do so."

What do you think about that, Sharon?

Prof Bessell: Well, yes, I will just say here that I think that is a great comment from Mark. The only point at which I would disagree with him is about us being too far down the road, because I do not think that opportunity is ever lost to rethink policies that are not only not working but policies that are actually doing damage. I would hope that we really can rethink the approach that we are taking to indigenous communities when it comes to a whole range of policies.

I think, more broadly from that fantastic discussion on last week's podcast, we really need to rethink what we want to do in relation to welfare policy broadly and what it aims to be about, what we are actually trying to do to people through welfare policy, and whether we want that to be punitive or whether we want it to be much more constructive. Yes, in some--; Yes, read Mark's comment and agree entirely.

Presenter: What do you think about that, Sally-Anne?

Sally-Anne Henfry: Yes, just reflecting on the excerpt from the podcast. It just reminded me of the importance of involving indigenous people in the development and implantation of policies,

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whether they are around employment, healthcare or other critical issues in society. We need indigenous involvement, and leadership, and voices in the policy-making process.

Presenter: Moving along to another article, "*The heat is on – an urgent case for climate action*" by Andrew Leigh. In this piece, Andrew Leigh writes that "Australia has set a series of concerning climate records this year" and "What the country desperately needs is effective energy policies."

We have got a comment here by @nobca2 [sp? 0:53:11] on Twitter, and they write, "Acting on climate change does not mean encouraging more flying and building new airports." I am keen to hear your thoughts on that, Sally-Anne. What do you think?

Sally-Anne Henfry: Well, I think no, the comment is right. It is not just about building new airports. What we need with climate change is a bold new vision and we need policies on climate change that cut across all sectors, whether it would be energy, agriculture, healthcare, or transport. I think this is an issue that is probably of greater significance for Australia right now and it is going to take a bold new vision.

Presenter: What are your thoughts, Sharon?

Prof Bessell: I get so sick of having this conversation, because it has got to be the most pressing issue facing our generation and it is an issue that is going to destroy the next generation if we do not act. Yes, we certainly need effective energy policies in this country and building more airports, more flying, all of those things, I think, are rightly problematic, but it drives me insane that we keep having conversations like that conversation that played out on the news this morning and yesterday around where coal fits in our country's future.

I think I heard Barnaby Joyce making the comment that he represents people who are living on \$750 a week and are dependent on the coal industry for their livelihoods, whereas others of his colleagues in the Coalition are representing electorates where the average income is \$2,500 a week and those people are doing okay.

The short-sightedness of that, I think, is so problematic. Barnaby Joyce – I rarely say this, but Barnaby Joyce is right that we have to be really worried about people who are living on \$750 a week, but the answer is not to continue a coal industry that is so problematic in terms of energy policy and climate change.

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It is like Groundhog Day. We keep having these discussions, and I think Andrew Leigh is right – we need to get out of that hole that we have dug ourselves into and think seriously about what the future is in terms of energy policy, and it is not more of the same. It cannot be more of the same.

Presenter: Let's move on to some of the suggestions that we got for future Pods. We are always super-keen to get your thoughts on the topics that you would like to see covered on the podcast. Integrated energy and climate policy is definitely one that comes up frequently in our suggestions, so if you want to do that, jump into the Facebook group and let us know, or reach out to us on Twitter, and that is exactly what Liam and Taylah [sp?] have done.

Liam said, "Free press at different political structures and how it would be possible or not possible, democracy – where is it going, development, and post-colonialism" are the things that he is interested in. Taylah [sp?] wrote, "Everything Australia – it is so difficult to find good Aus podcasts."

What do you think about that, Sally-Anne?

Sally-Anne Henfry: Well, they all look like great suggestions. I think with the election coming up different political structures and how it would be possible or not possible might be a great one to look at going forward.

Presenter: What do you think, Sharon?

Prof Bessell: Yes, they are all great suggestions. Of course, we did recently have a pod which featured Carolyn Hendriks and others around deliberative democracy and grassroots democracy, so we have had a bit of a look at different political structures, but I think more discussion around that is always very, very welcome.

In terms of everything Australia, I am not quite sure what Taylah is thinking in terms of the focus, but of course the Pod is an Australian product, engaging with the world, so we do have one good Australian podcast.

Presenter: It seems like we are all very interested in what Taylah actually means by that, so I would like to pick up on that and say one thing: Taylah, challenge accepted. I reckon we should get together a list of good listens so, listeners, let us know your suggestions for Aus [?? 0:57:20] pods we might want to listen to and share with our listeners. You can let us know on our Facebook

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Prof Rubenstein: Professor Kim Rubenstein, Law School, ANU College of Law

Helen Machalias: Helen Machalias, Director of Communication, Advocacy and Fundraising, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Canberra

Caitlin Figueiredo: Founder, Jasiri

group, [policyforumpod](#), on Twitter, where we are [@APPSPolicyForum](#), or just ping us an email, podcast@policyforum.net.

Also, a big thanks to everyone who has commented or left us a question. We really enjoy hearing from you and, if you enjoyed today's episode, then perhaps you might want to leave us a quick review on iTunes – it only takes 30 seconds. Just find the fifth star and it will be a big help to us in getting word out about this podcast.

We will be back next week with another Policy Forum Pod, but until then from me, Julia, cheerio.

Prof Bessell: And from me, Sharon Bessell, bye-bye for now.

Sally-Anne Henfry: Bye, everyone.

[end music 0:58:04]

[audio ends 0:58:19]