

Take on Board



# Transcript – Stacey Williams

## Recognition Matters, what it is and why it's important

Helga Svendsen 0:00

Today on the take on board podcast, I'm speaking with Stacey Williams about Recognition Matters, what it is and why it's important. First, let me tell you about Stacey. Stacey says in her background information that she hasn't been on any boards, yet. We're pretty sure their take on board community can help her out with that. So I might even return to that bit later in the conversation. Stacy manages the Recognition Matters campaign at the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Victoria. Less than a third of nominations in Australia's honour system are for women. This means fewer awards go to women. Men have consistently received around 70% of the awards since the Order of Australia began in 1975. Men have also received more awards in the higher levels such as the Companion of the Order of Australia, the AC, women are often at the lower level, the middle of the Order of Australia. OAM. Gender Equity is important because it creates visible role models for women, and it closes the gender gap. The recognition Matters campaign was created after talking to 56 Victorian leaders about what would help to increase nominations. They recommended an online toolkit to make nominating easy together with a promotional campaign. So Stacy manages all of this for the Victorian Government. We'll learn more about what it is and the progress that's been made in our discussion. Welcome to the Take on Board podcast, Stacey,

Stacey Williams 1:26

Thank you so much for having me.

Helga Svendsen 1:29

It is awesome to have you. And of course, I want to dig into Recognition Matters and hear a bit more about that. But as always, before we do that, let's dig a little bit deeper about you. Can you tell me something you're proud of from the last month or so?

Stacey Williams 1:44

It's with really great pleasure that in the last probably a couple of months, I'd say it was the Queen's Birthday announcement we had in June this year, where we saw for the second time, gender equity

within Victoria within the award system. So 50% of the awards given to Victorians were for women. So it's the only time or second time sorry, in the history of the awards system, as you mentioned, since 1975, that we have seen gender equity.

Helga Svendsen 2:19

First up, yay, amazing, I can totally see how you would be proud of that. Second up, oh my god, really 2022. And it is the second time since 1975, that we've had gender equity. Oh, my Lord, there is so much to do,

Stacey Williams 2:37

There's still so much to do. And just by achieving it two times within the history of the awards, we can't just rest on that, thinking that it is going to perpetuate and continue at that rate. We have seen that it has sort of gone up and down over the last five or so years since I've been managing Recognition Matters. So it's really important that we continue with the momentum.

Helga Svendsen 3:03

Okay, so then, actually, can I check then on the 50%? That was this year? Was that at all levels? Or was that overall?

Stacey Williams 3:11

No, that's just overall. Okay.

Helga Svendsen 3:15

And in fact, random aside, I think you already knew this. My sister was amongst them. So just, you know, shout out to my sister Ingrid, who got herself and OAM in the Queen's Birthday Honours, and totally kept it secret. She and I did the Larapinta trek about a week before that, or two weeks before that did not let on how is that for a vault anyway,

Stacey Williams 3:37

I know. And that's amazing. So you can trust your sister in keeping something from everyone. So go to for a secret wouldn't.

Helga Svendsen 3:47

Anyway, so yeah, well done to her and, of course, all the other people who got those honours. So I mean, I touched on it a little bit in the introduction. Tell us about the Recognition Matters campaign, what it is and why it's important.

Stacey Williams 4:02

The importance of the campaign is that I guess the, like I mentioned just before the past five years, I have learned that there are so many worthy women that should be recognized. And I've learnt how easy it is to nominate them. And by acknowledging their contributions and having women's achievements placed on the public record, which is available on the Australian Honours website creates more visible role models for our next generation of women to come. nominating an outstanding woman is also a fantastic way to elevate her influence and also bring attention to the work that she's doing. We know from discussions that we've had with past recipients that doors open for for women that potentially have post nominals which are the letters after their names, and that includes applying for funding and things like that. So it's just really important that we continue to nominate these amazing Australians. It has to be across all, like all of our states. You know, fortunately, Victoria is at the forefront of that by having this campaign, and having a really strong team to promote it.

Helga Svendsen 5:18

Oh my God, what an amazing job you have, where you just get to find out about amazing women, find out first who they are, then find out more about them and then pop them in for their honours, like, lucky you ha,

Stacey Williams 5:31

I fall down the rabbit hole I seriously do. If I am researching one woman, no doubt, I'll find another four or five that I need to jot down to go back to later to then nominate them as well. Because fortunately for us, at this point in time, there are so many women that should have been recognised before today before 2022. But they're just, there's just so many women that we can now promote and recognise.

Helga Svendsen 6:05

And like you, I have heard at least anecdotally of women who have got the letters after their name. And it definitely opens doors for them, they are perceived differently, rightly or wrongly, it is something that really helps to amplify their voice and amplify their impact. So it is something I think that women generally should do and women board members, I think it will really help to ensure that

we end up with gender equity in the boardroom as well for those women because they will be as I say it, rightly or wrongly, will be perceived differently.

Stacey Williams 6:40

Exactly. Exactly. Right. Yeah.

Helga Svendsen 6:42

So part of your work is finding a nominating those women and getting to gender equity. Anyone can nominate someone, right?

Stacey Williams 6:52

Any individual community organisation business, our professional body can nominate for an award. And nominations can be made by the organisation. And they carry the same weight as if being nominated by an individual. And it's it's about the information that's in the nomination that matters. And I guess you can download our template from the Recognition Matters website to draft your nomination. So when your nomination is ready, you will need to use the Australian Honours online form to submit your nomination. So if you are using the word template, all you have to do is copy and paste that information from the document into the online form. And after you've submitted the nominations, this is probably the hardest element to nominating someone is it takes about a year to two years for the council to decide whether or not to award an honour to the nominee. You'll be notified either way if your nomination is successful, or unsuccessful. So I highly recommend for those listeners, and I am mindful that you have a lot of listeners that are overseas. So for those in Australia, get on to the Recognition Matters website, or you could do it internationally as well as a tool and use those tools that we've created for you to make that process a lot easier. And for those that are into national. Find out what your local award program is. Yeah. If you're a commonwealth, I think most Commonwealth countries have an order of their country. I know New Zealand do and Canada do so jump online, have a look. If you are from a non Commonwealth country, have a look at what abroad programs exist within your whether it's your local community, state or jurisdiction and nominate them elevate them

Helga Svendsen 8:42

Absolutely, wholeheartedly agree. This is not just for Australia to do this. It is for all over the world really to nominate women for these sorts of honours or awards. So what are the steps? What are people will I hope download the form and folks, we will make sure there is links in the show notes to all of this stuff. And if you're out walking, don't worry, just go to my website and all of the links will be there. But what are the steps? What do people need to know? What should they have in their

their head that they will need to find out about all these awesome women to nominate them for these Australian Honours?

Stacey Williams 9:18

So I guess sometimes we kind of have questions around Oh, I know this woman and she's been doing some really great stuff. But I just don't know if she's worthy, or I don't know if the work she's doing is enough. And to that I say have a look at the Australian Honours website. And you can actually look at past recipients and I know that you've actually hosted a number of those women on your podcast. So I'd like to highlight if I can, Rachel Towart, OAM and Leonie Morgan AM. They're just two names that sort of just came to me when I was researching for this podcast and have a look at their citation. So it gives you a bit of an in depth look, I guess at why they've been awarded, it'll give you a good idea of what the council might be looking for in a nomination as well. So you can actually see what these women have achieved on the website. And they're really great examples, obviously, there Australian honours recipients. So I'd highly recommend that. And that's usually the first hurdle is I just don't know, once you've overcome the hurdle of whether or not this woman is worthy enough to be a recipient, and worth nominating. It's important to find three to four really good referees that are going to support the woman that you're nominating, they can speak to her work, they can support her nomination, they do need to know her quite personally or professionally, because they will really need to speak to the work that you're nominating this woman for. So that's really important. Again, on our website, at Recognition Matters, you can find a referee template, I could email all the time, the referees I reached out to I have, I don't know who they are. So it's a really nice way of being able to reach out to someone, I've found that it's easier to email someone because they have their own time to reply to you, rather than a call, it can put someone on the backfoot. And you really want them to be engaged 99% of the time a referee is completely engaged and more than willing to do the thing that you're asking them to do, which is just be on standby in two years time for that phone call from the council to confirm that you're happy to support this nomination. So yeah, so that's probably then the next hurdle. So probably the final hurdle would be the waiting game. So from nominating submitting your nomination online, it is a one to two year wait until you actually find out the result of your nomination. So that's probably the hardest component to the nominating process. Otherwise, you know, I mean, I've got a few under my belt. So I kind of maybe take it for granted how easy it is. But if your listeners are nominating someone they know, they're already in front of me, they're already they already know who they are, you could reach out to as a referee, and they might not need to worry about it being official through an email, it could be a phone call, saying hey, would you mind supporting, you know, Jo Brown, please. And they will. And that's all they have to do. And not a referee doesn't have to play any more of a role. Apart from I guess it's like a referee for a job interview or like a prospect job application.

Helga Svendsen 12:34

So there's three hurdles as we one is, the first one is kind of is the person worthy. And I guess in there, you're defining their contribution or the impact that they've had. The second one is about finding their referees. And the third one is just sit back and wait and be patient because it can take

years. So can I just dig a little bit on both of those things on the first two, for defining the contribution or defining the impact? Like what are we talking here? Are we talking, you know, five doc points? Because often what you see on the website is the summarised version? Is that all that goes in? Or is there additional information that goes in behind that?

Stacey Williams 13:13

That's a really great question. Because you're right, it is a very succinct, high level CV of that person online. I've seen some, I've helped look at nominations from the past that have been unsuccessful. And I've seen the amount of work and the amount of attachments and things like that, that accompany that nomination. From what I've experienced myself with my nominations, dot point is suffice like, high level dot point, you know, almost like speaking notes, almost, you know, you have your most important, highest achievement at the top, it's like, again, resume. And that's always good, like a resume is a really good resource as well. So if you can get your hands on someone's resume, that's a really great just attach that to the nomination as well.

Helga Svendsen 14:01

LinkedIn must be an incredible resource

Stacey Williams 14:05

LinkedIn is like my best friend because. LinkedIn for me, not only can you find really great, useful information about the nominee, but you can actually see people that you could reach out to as a referee.

Helga Svendsen 14:16

Absolutely. So for that first part I'm hearing, maybe less is more, in a way don't, don't make them wade through 927 pages of awesome things this person have done, just give them the high level contributions, resume impact, whatever it may be to make it easy for them to really see what this person has done.

Stacey Williams 14:35

Exactly.

Helga Svendsen 14:36

For referees doesn't help if the referees already have honours themselves,

Stacey Williams 14:42

In my opinion. It definitely adds weight to a nomination if some or one of your referees has a post nominal already because they have already been recognised by the council. So they've obviously seen something in that person. And if they're putting their name as referring to this other nomination, then it does it is definitely beneficial. I wouldn't say that you have to. But you know, some of the work that people do, it's just natural that there are more people that potentially have post nominals. So the letters after their name or their, you know, they've been recognized within the Order of Australia as well. So, yes, I would say yes, it would definitely help.

Helga Svendsen 15:24

Fantastic. And it's, you know, at least there is a public list of everybody who's got the Australian Honours I, side comment. But when I got my fellowship at the Australian Institute of directors, you need to get three referees from people who are also fellows of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, but there's no list of who their fellows are. So So I like you use LinkedIn, let's, you know, just put in FAICD and see who they are. And you can kind of find out that way. But I asked for a list and they won't provide it. So it does make it a little bit challenging when you need to provide names of particular people, but they won't tell you what the long list is. So at least the Australian Honours system, they're all listed there on on their website, people most often have them on their LinkedIn as well. So you're right. When you're looking at people's connections, you can see who's got to be honest, and maybe stop there, if you can.

Stacey Williams 16:15

Yes, definitely touching on that. And I'm glad you brought that up. One of the things I wanted to sort of highlight as well today, for those listening in Australia that happen to be recipients of the Order of Australia, please use your post nominals, please use your letters after your name. It's so important that we start to see as a society as a state. As communities, it's so important that we see that women have been recognised, we haven't been overlooked. Like we've really done well in the last five years to promote women within the Order of Australia. And it's so important for the next generation. As I touched on earlier in our chat, it's so important that we have these wonderful, accomplished women who have achieved so much in their life to date. And we don't say it because they don't include their post nominals after their name on their LinkedIn or their business card. If you still have business cards, you can actually get it on your driver's license, like it is your name. So please, please, I'm begging I do beg, please put your post nominals on your LinkedIn. So you know, those younger, you know, women that are looking for people to reach out to as a mentor, or, you

know, someone that they can, you know, reach out to, they will see that you've got your post nominals. And it's just so important. It might not seem like it, but it really is.

Helga Svendsen 17:44

It's interesting, I think it even links back to that first part about is the person I've got in mind worthy or not, I think. And I could be generalizing wildly, but I think women broadly are not as good at tooting their own horn basically, as men might be. So there might even be more questioning about is this person worthy or not. My point is folks that are listening, if you've got someone in mind, they're worthy. That is my point. In fact, my point is, they are more than worthy. Having somebody else kind of fly the flag for them to their horn, whatever analogy you want to use is incredibly valuable in that as well. So yeah, it's a great point to a to recognise that contribution that has been made. And then to, you know, once you've got the award, fly the flag, you know, show it off a little bit, there's nothing wrong with just a little bit of showing off, it's a good thing, because it shows to others that it can be done.

Stacey Williams 18:40

That's right. And it's just so important that we start to change that narrative of women just doing what they do, because they do it, you know, we have every right to be recognised, just as men are. And it's just so it's just really important for the younger generations to see these women that they are being recognized. I don't want to be talking, you know, in a in a few years time where we may see gender equity as a consistent thing, which is great, right? That's, that's that's the whole objective of the campaign. But we don't want the numbers just to be there. If we don't see women with their personal, like, defeats the purpose really, like the whole purpose of recognising limit is so we can see you

Helga Svendsen 19:27

So we can recognise them. That's right. It's the recognition. Oh, okay. So two things I want to pick up on there. So one is because you just mentioned the lapel pin. When are they going to change the lapel pin? I mean, really, if we're going to have more women nominated, can we get past the lapel pin, you know, maybe some lovely little earrings, pop it on a ring? You know, is there another way that we could? Well, anyway, it's probably not It's not up to us, is it but how glorious would it be if it wasn't just a lapel pin?

Stacey Williams 19:57

But I would encourage anyone that I guess he's listening to your podcast, if you do have your honour, reach out to the Secretariat and provide your feedback. It's like anything like if you don't speak up, they don't know. They may have whisper, they may hear whispers or they may have, you



know, one or two people come to them saying what we've just spoken about, you know, it's just not conducive to some of the clothing that we decide to wear. And some men for that matter, like not all men wear suits. That's what the lapel pin was designed for is like that. Pocket. Absolutely. So I think I think it's really important that if there are listeners there that would like to say something changed, right? That feedback?

Helga Svendsen 20:38

Yeah, absolutely. Put magnets on the back or whatever, if you're able to remodel them. Anyway, I'm going down a rabbit hole, and I won't go down that rabbit hole. The next thing I wanted to ask about is we are making progress in terms of equity of getting the number of women, the same number of women getting honours as there are men, which is awesome. I'm wondering how we are going in relation to diversity and diversity being represented there. Because my hunch would be that most of the women being nominated probably have, you know, let's face it, white privileged women as well. So I'm just wondering, how are we going in terms of ensuring that that representation of people actually who are nominated and the Australian honours actually represents our society? What are your thoughts there?

Stacey Williams 21:28

That's been a pet goal of mine within the Recognition Matters campaign. So obviously, bottom line is we want to see gender parity. But within that gender parity, we don't want to see what we've seen in the past, which, as you've just said, we don't want to replicate the middle aged man, that's potentially the one that receives the receives the honour, so we don't want to see that within the gender base. So I've been doing some really great work with the new end aim, who is the chairperson at the Victorian Multicultural Commission, her team do amazing work. And one of the goals I guess, of the Victorian Public Service is don't create something new if something already exists. So we've her team, we've been able to use a tick box on their Victorian Multicultural Award Program. So they're honour roll, their awards of excellence. And we use a tick box there. So I can actually have that information shared with me to promote some of those nominations to be considered for an Order of Australia as well.

Helga Svendsen 22:35

Oh, my God, brilliant. Okay, that is such a simple thing. Isn't it included tick box. Like, there's also I think, the Disability Leadership Awards in Victoria. There's no doubt a whole range of other ones as well. And I'm assuming you've done similar in some of those others tick, the box gets sent to you pop up. Ah, ah, it's such a simple thing. Oh, brilliant, so good.

Stacey Williams 22:55

It's those conversations that you have with your colleagues within different departments or, you know, in different Commission's in the Commission's, you know, space where you want to reinvent the wheel, why can't we just do something really simple. And again, we could do this at local council level as well, for their award programs, or if they're candidates or their nominations for the local awards, you know, some of them might not be at the level or the caliber that we're looking for, for the Australian Honours, there is the multicultural awards, there are the Aboriginal Honour Roll, there is the Victorian Women's Honour Roll. So there's so many award programs where if they're not suitable at the moment, right now, for an Order of Australia, promote them to a local award program or a state run program, where maybe in another couple of years time if then promote them to an Order of Australia, because the you might have been some more evidence and some more information to support that.

Helga Svendsen 23:50

Yeah, fantastic. Oh, Stacey, so much gold in here. I think I probably know the answer to this question, but I'm going to ask it anyway. What are the main points you want people to take away from the conversation that we've had today?

Stacey Williams 24:03

Nominate, nominate, today!

Helga Svendsen 24:05

I knew that. It would be great. And I agree wholeheartedly. Yes.

Stacey Williams 24:09

And if I can say this, if you don't have time, if you're a woman who multitasks ie, mother, carer, full time worker, any of the above, or you just don't have time for whatever other reason, use my contact details in the show notes and email me. I'm here as a resource to the Victorian Public. So please, don't feel like you're doing this alone. Reach out to me and I will help in any capacity.

Helga Svendsen 24:39

Oh my god, you're going to be inundated Stacey in the most wonderful, beautiful way. Hurray. I think I know the answer to this one as well. You've just provided actually you've just provided I was gonna say is there a resource you would like to share with the Take on Board community but I think

it's the recognition matters, website and your email address. Yes. Awesome. We'll make sure we put that in the show notes as well. Ah, Stacey. Awesome. Thank you so much. And indeed, I had Ruth McGowan on the podcast, oh, gosh, more than a year ago now, who was one of the women who started the Honour a Woman campaign, which I'm guessing was kind of in a way, maybe that precursor is not the right word. But the catalyst maybe for the role that you've got, and the Victorian Government stepping up on some of this stuff?

Stacey Williams 25:25

It is. It's Ruth, Elizabeth, and Carol. They're the three women that are responsible for me being here. So I thank them all the time. And I'm still in contact with the three of them. I only spoke to Ruth the other day. Because yeah, they are champions in looking at gender equity. And I mean, Ruth just does some great stuff. Like she's just a, I don't want to use the word Trailblazer, because she like, but amazing. Amazing.

Helga Svendsen 25:52

Yes, three legends. So thanks to them as well, for yeah, for really being the catalyst for this. And thank you for all the work that you do in making sure that we now have gender equity, hurray, we'll continue to work with people like you, but also all put in some effort to make sure that they are diverse awards been given and that all of these wonderful. Women are being nominated at all levels of the honours as well. So yeah, thank you for all of your hard work. And thank you for sharing your wisdom with the Take on Board community today.

Stacey Williams 26:25

Thank you so much for having me. And thank you to your community for listening.