



TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS  
*Fair Work Act 2009*

**CEREMONIAL SITTING OF THE FAIR WORK COMMISSION  
TO WELCOME COMMISSIONER FOX and COMMISSIONER  
REDFORD**

**Melbourne**

**9.34 AM, WEDNESDAY, 28 AUGUST 2024**

PN1

JUSTICE HATCHER: Good morning, everybody. Before we begin I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional custodians of this land today, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

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As no doubt you all know this ceremony today is for the purpose of acknowledging the appointments to the Fair Work Commission of Commissioner Fox and Commissioner Redford, and I wish to personally welcome their families, speakers at the Bar table, and all the guests present. I would first ask Ms Godden who is representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations to address the Commission. Ms Godden.

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MS S GODDEN: May it please the Commission. I begin today by acknowledging the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we meet, and pay my respects to the elders past, present and emerging. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

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It is an honour to be here representing the Australian Government on behalf of Senator the Honourable Murray Watt, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. Minister Watt sends his apologies for being unable to be here today to attend today's welcoming of new Commissioners Julia Fox and Ben Redford.

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I acknowledge your Honour, the president, the members of the Commission, and the members of the Trade Union Movement industry and representatives of the legal community here today. I welcome and acknowledge Commissioners Fox and Redford and welcome the members of your families who are present on this significant occasion.

PN6

Last month marked 15 years since the Fair Work Commission was established. In this time our society has evolved. The scale of this is evident from the rise of the gig economy, and from Monday the Commission can for the first time set tailored minimum standards for employee like or gig workers.

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These standards if made will set rules about pay and conditions for employee like workers. Minister Watt highlighted the importance of this measure which will ensure ride share and delivery drivers no longer fall through the cracks. This is just one example of how the Commission and its predecessors help shape Australia's workplace landscape, and they have done so for more than 100 years.

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This role is as important as ever it was. It is highlighted with the implementation of the government's significant workplace relations reforms to ensure secure jobs, better pay and safer workplaces for Australian workers, which includes introducing minimum standards for gig workers.

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The Commission has evolved to keep up with the pace of change that we are seeing in our economy and our society. As much as technology has changed the fundamental tenor of a fair go must be upheld. There must be balance and there must be fairness, and this is what is delivered by the Commission.

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As the nation changes so too does the framework of our workplace relations system. With Fair Work legislation covering the majority of Australian workplaces the decisions of this Commission impact the nation. These decisions are felt in homes, they are felt in workplaces, and from Monday the Commission's work was extended beyond these traditional employment relationships with new powers to improve the rights and protections of certain independent contractors.

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The Commission in addition to being able to set minimum standards for employee like workers will be able to set standards for road transport industry, having regard to the need to ensure the industry is safe, sustainable and viable.

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The Commission also has new functions relating to unfair deactivation or termination for those workers, and will be able to resolve disputes about unfair terms in service contracts. These are historic changes which will see a brand new set of stakeholders interact with the Commission. This will be new challenges and opportunities for the Commission, which has already demonstrated its commitment to genuine consultation and outreach for affected stakeholders as it prepared for the commencement of these new functions.

PN13

The Commission is required to perform its functions and exercise its powers under the Fair Work Act in a manner that is just, fair, open and transparent, and in a way that promotes harmonious and cooperative workplace relations. Minister Watt is absolutely determined that the Commission will continue to perform its functions in this way under the government.

PN14

Commissioner Fox, you bring to the Fair Work Commission a wealth of knowledge and experience in workplace relations, having represented the interests of workers at the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association for over 25 years. In 1996 you graduated from Swinburne University with a Bachelor of Arts majoring in business law and philosophy, and in 2010 you graduated from Monash University with a Master of Law.

PN15

You began your career at the SDA as an organiser in the Victorian branch in 1996. From 2000 until 2016 you were a national industrial officer and national work health and safety officer at the SDA. As a national industrial officer you negotiated and drafted enterprise agreements for the Retail Fast Food and Warehousing industry, and made appearances before this Commission in relation to awards and agreements that impacted SDA members. As a national work health and safety officer you advised on and coordinated work health and safety policy, campaigns and strategy for members of the SDA.

PN16

In 2016 you became a national assistant secretary of the SDA, a role you held until you were appointed to this Commission on 27 May. In this role you were responsible for overseeing a multi-disciplinary team of industrial officers, policy officers, communications and administration officers to deliver outcomes for SDA members at the national level.

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This included coordinating and overseeing research, submissions and campaigns across a range of areas, including gender equality, work and care, work health and safety, gender violence, customer abuse and violence, discrimination, superannuation and retirement outcomes.

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Commissioner Fox, you bring to this role strong leadership experience, and with your expertise and experience in workplace relations I am confident you will exercise your duties with impartiality and diligence.

PN19

Commissioner Redford, you bring to the Fair Work Commission a breadth of knowledge and experience in workplace relations, having worked over the last 20 years in workplace relations as both a solicitor and a union official. You graduated from Deakin University in 1998 with a Bachelor of Law and a Bachelor of Arts.

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In 2000 you were admitted as a lawyer in the Victorian Supreme Court, and in the same year commenced your career as a solicitor at JobWatch where you worked as part of a small team of solicitors engaged in law reform and public interest litigation in the employment, industrial and anti-discrimination jurisdiction.

PN21

You then joined the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union as a legal officer in 2004 where you provided industrial and legal support to the union's members, including in the early stages of the Clean Start campaign.

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In 2007 you became the assistant secretary of United Voice Victoria, where you were responsible for the management of the Victorian branch of the union, and the leadership of several teams of industrial officers and lawyers. You then became the executive director strategic power of the United Workers' Union in 2019.

PN23

In your role as executive director you had responsibility for a large team of lawyers, industrial officers and research analysts. You were responsible for directing industrial and legal affairs of the UWU on issues impacting the union's members across a broad range of industry, including early education and care, aged care, warehousing and manufacturing, public sector health and education, hospitality, horticulture and property services.

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Commissioner Redford, with your strong leadership experience and your expertise in workplace relations I am confident you will exercise your duties with impartiality and diligence.

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The government has made it clear that for the Commission to work properly, and as intended it needs to be balanced. That is why it is restoring balance to the Fair Work Commission to give workers as equal a voice as employers in decisions that affect them.

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Your Honour, great responsibility is placed on Members of the Fair Work Commission. The balance and fairness of the system depends on the integrity, judgment, skills of members of the tribunal and of its senior leaders. If they are to discharge their responsibilities effectively they require the goodwill, understanding and cooperation of parties, employers, employees and their representatives. I trust this will be forthcoming from all concerned to Commissioners Fox and Redford.

PN27

Commissioners Fox and Redford, on behalf of the Australian Government I congratulate you on your appointment as Commissioners of the Fair Work Commission. I have no doubt you will make an important contribution to the work of the tribunal in years to come. I convey our goodwill and wish you well in your exercise of the duties of your office. Thank you.

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JUSTICE HATCHER: I now invite Mr Mitchell, the assistant secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions to speak on behalf of the union movement generally.

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MR J MITCHELL: Thank you, your Honour. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of land we are meeting on today, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation and pay my respects to elders past and present. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land. No doubt many ceremonies have been held on this land or around it for tens of thousands of years.

PN30

I would also like to acknowledge you, your Honour, and all the Members of the Commission, as well as members of the Trade Union Movement industry and legal community and especially friends and family of the new Commissioners who are here today. I would like to acknowledge too Ms Godden representing Minister Watt and Jessica Tinsley representing ACCI and employers more broadly.

PN31

Your Honour, on behalf of the ACTU and our affiliated unions and the working men and women of this country it is my honour to acknowledge Commissioners Fox and Redford and to congratulate them both on their appointments today. You will now help to lead one of our nations most trusted and important institutions.

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The Commission and its predecessors have underpinned an industrial relations system that strives to achieve fairness at work, and some of the highest standards of living in the world. Your appointment makes one of our nation's most trusted and important institutions even more so.

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First, Commissioner Fox: nearly 30 years at the SDA, from an organiser literally on the shop floor to helping lead your union on the national stage. In Julia the Commission is getting a wealth of experience, a sharp mind, a tremendous work ethic, and an acute understanding of how workplace relations underpins the quality of life for working people.

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She started as an organiser at the Victorian branch of the SDA back in 1996, organising and representing workers. In 2000 she became the SDA's national industrial officer and national work health and safety officer, becoming a highly respected expert, a great advocate and an inspired mentor to many colleagues.

PN35

In 2016 Julia became the first woman assistant national secretary of the SDA, helping lead the union for seven years from national bargaining advocacy, and from national bargaining to advocacy at the highest levels. She has been senior union director at the Board of Rest, one of Australia's largest superannuation funds, and Julia's work as a trustee director should not be underestimated.

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She was appointed trustee director in 2018 and quickly became one of the union movements, and industry super fund movements thought leaders on how to make superannuation fairer for everyone, but in particular for women, on the value of good governance, and the good governance comes through the values.

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At the ACTU Julia was chair of our women's committee and held spearhead life changing reforms for women at work, including support for the respect at work agenda and roster justice. Julia acutely understands the impossible job that many workers, especially women on lower pay, have between work and care, especially in the Retail and Fast Food and Warehousing, rosters are unpredictable, hours that may be unreliable and unsociable, and pay that is inadequate.

PN38

She took those member experiences into the world's first research on work and care and advocated for roster justice at the highest levels. This had a direct impact on strengthening the Fair Work Act for working women and in the SDA's bargaining agenda, and today the Fair Work Act objects now include promoting job security and gender equality.

PN39

The right to reflect flexible working has moved beyond the right to ask an easily ignored question to something that gives workers and Australians, particularly women, the right to flexible work arrangements, rights enforceable by arbitration. For anyone that picks up a copy of the Fair Work Act today Julia has left a significant mark on it. Julia, since you have added to this workload of this

fantastic place, an already busy place, maybe it is only right you step in and lend a hand.

PN40

Julia's work at the SDA assisted working people on so many levels. Through grievance handling you helped individuals for better outcomes. Through bargaining you improved the rights of retail workers. Through research and policy work you delivered positive change for millions of Australians. This is an impressive legacy, and she is not done yet. Julia's sharp assessments and intelligent insights will be invaluable in her new role and our community will be better for it.

PN41

Secondly, Commissioner Redford: you are a rare person. Not only one of the sharpest minds in IR, but one of the nicest, most modest and hard working. Ben started as a solicitor at JobWatch, the Victorian community legal centre specialising in rights of work, and then as a legal officer at the LHMU from 2004 to 2007; assistant secretary at United Voice Victoria from 2007 to 2019, and then executive director of the United Workers' Union since 2019 leading the union's industrial work and legal work nationally.

PN42

Over nearly a quarter of a century Ben has made a profound contribution to work for working people in some of the toughest sectors to be a worker in Australia. High influence across broad areas of UWU coverage is profound and a list barely does it justice. Whether awards, agreements or industrial campaigns Ben has worked to improve the pay and conditions for early childhood workers his whole career.

PN43

Most importantly he was responsible for making the very first supported bargaining application, and was critical in engaging in that bargaining. It is in no small part thanks to the work that Ben did prior to his appointment that the Commonwealth Government has announced a \$3.4b in critical funding for the sector. Equal pay is so close. But this wasn't where the work started. Ben had been involved in the low paid bargaining applications prior, and in the years of industrial work to get better pay for early childhood educators.

PN44

His deep knowledge and experience was also key in the recent IR reforms to fix the profound flaws in our multi employer bargaining streams. He was part of ensuring that hospitality workers and other workers in precarious employment have protections during COVID-19 and significantly changed the working landscape.

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He was part of a campaigning for the first industry setting agreements and cleaning and security in the early 2000s, and part of establishing the industry agreements and tender standards in the security industry. Commissioner Redford works hard.

PN46



At the United Workers' Union he was famously the first to start and the last to leave every single day. He gives absolutely everything he has got. In running matters in this place no stone was left unturned. He has been a mentor and a true leader, giving his time, his wisdom and his support to so many people across the union movement. Even when he clearly didn't have time to help or support people he pretended that he did, and he led by example and showed so many what a dedicated committed union official looked like. He inspired them, and he inspired them to want to achieve that.

PN47

Ben is not one to seek the limelight, and he is probably squirming right now, but he knows that he is a support crew to incredible brave working people of his union. He prioritises listening, not talking, especially when working with members. He is not out at the front, he is behind the scenes keeping the show on the road.

PN48

Finally, I am supposed to say that the rebalancing of the Fair Work Commission is critically important for the trust and confidence of this most important institution, and of course it is. In Julia and Ben the Commission in Australia's IR system is getting two of the hardest working, sharpest, fairest and most modest IR practitioners in this country. That will be written across every page of the decisions that come out of this place with their names on it, but we in the union movement will miss them. Our loss is outweighed by everyone's gain. Congratulations again to Julia and Ben. If it pleases the Commission.

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JUSTICE HATCHER: Ms Tinsley on behalf of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and employers generally.

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MS J TINSLEY: Thank you, your Honour. I would as well like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to elders both past and present. I would also like to acknowledge your Honour, the President, other Members of the Fair Work Commission here today, my fellow representatives at the Bar table, Ms Godden, Mr Mitchell and Mr Felham, and in particular the two new Commissioners and their family and friends. It's certainly a packed house today, which is fantastic to see.

PN51

It is a privilege to appear here today before the Commission on behalf of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and employers more generally to welcome two of the newest appointments to the Bench, Commissioners Redford and Fox. As is often emphasised at these ceremonies the Fair Work Commission performs a crucial role in the Australian economy. Industrial peace, social cohesion, economic productivity and workplace relations all depend on its efficiency.

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As a result it is imperative that its functions are performed by exceptional and trusted Tribunal Members, of which today we are officially welcoming two more. Commissioners Redford and Fox, on behalf of ACCI and employers more broadly I sincerely congratulate you on your appointments to the Commission



today. Your experiences and qualifications make you both worthy appointees to this important public body.

PN53

Commissioner Redford, your industrial advocacy while at various unions in both state and at the national level will hold you in good stead for your new role. Commissioner, in 2019 you helped bring public attention to fraudulent behaviour in the security industry in Victoria. During your time in the union movement you have demonstrated your commitment to promoting an industrial relations system that is fair and safe for all workers.

PN54

Later at the UWU you transferred those skills honed in Victoria from advocacy and representations at state level to national advocacy, maintaining that same commitment to ensuring compliance with workplace obligations. Commissioner Redford, you will be a great asset to the Fair Work Commission.

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Commissioner Fox, it is fitting that you alongside Commissioner Redford bring a tremendous wealth of experience and knowledge to the Commission after having so strongly advocated for the rights of workers during your time in the union movement.

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Your success as is impossible to miss when surveying your extensive industrial credentials has clearly been driven by a profound sense of justice and desire to enshrine it in the workplace relations system. As an organiser in Victoria, a national industrial officer, and later as national assistant secretary at the SDA, you dedicated yourself to fighting for the rights of workers.

PN57

Your work on behalf of young people, but young people in retail in particular is something I know we will all hold in high regard. Your fight against sexual harassment and abuse in retail workplaces is to be commended and something which I firmly hope you will bring to your new role.

PN58

While of course your role at the Commission will be quite different from your role at the SDA there is no doubt that your exposure to the system is critical in the exercise of the discretion which the legislator has (indistinct) you in. Moreover, I have seen you persistently call out that where issues arise in the workplace relations system we all need to work together to fix them. It is not simply on employers or employees, rather it's a team effort. It is therefore plainly clear that you appreciate the importance of Australia's industrial relations system, promoting cooperation between businesses and workers. That is a well rounded view that I look forward to seeing in the exercise of your discretion here in the Commission.

PN59

Finally, it is worth noting the significance of two more appointees to the Fair Work Commission, reflecting the growing workload associated with recent changes. Commissioners, your leadership in your new roles will no doubt serve as an inspiring example for countless other advocates who appear before you. Commissioners Redford and Fox, on behalf of the ACCI network we extend

our warmest welcome and sincere congratulations on your appointments. If it pleases the Commission.

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JUSTICE HATCHER: I now invite Commissioner Fox to speak.

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COMMISSIONER FOX: Thank you, Mr President, and good morning to everyone. I too would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we gather today and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

PN62

My sincere thanks to Ms Gooden, Ms Tinsley and Mr Mitchell for your very kind and generous words this morning. I want to also thank my Melbourne colleagues for joining us here today. You have all been so warm and generous with your time and advice over these past few months and it is deeply appreciated.

PN63

To Commissioner Redford it's lovely to be sharing this morning with you and our associates Nessa and Sandy. I particularly want to thank my associate Sandy for all her patience, good humour, her very welcoming smile and support over these last few months. I would also like to thank everyone at the Fair Work Commission, the wonderful team of staff led by Mr Murray Furlong, that make much of the Commission's work possible. It is a great team and a great culture.

PN64

I am grateful for today and being given the opportunity to reflect on the people who have influenced me and guided me over the years to the place where I find myself today, appointed to this important institution, the Fair Work Commission.

PN65

Like so many people I started my working life in the retail industry as a 15 year old working at Target, or as we used to call it the Red Spot Boutique. Little did I know it would lead to a 30 year career working for the union that represents retail workers. Retail workers are a broad and diverse group, from the 15 year old in their first job, to the 70 year old who is still working, and everything in between. Walk into a supermarket, chat to the staff, and you will get a great temperature check on how people in the community are feeling. I have always loved that about retail.

PN66

I guess what led me here began with my parents, both strong social justice advocates who demonstrated that if you want to see change you have to be part of the change. It's not going to happen as a bystander. I saw this with my mum, a beneficiary of the Whitlam Government's free higher education policy.

PN67

Mum studied whilst raising a family, which then led to a great career in diversity and equity in the higher education sector, ensuring that all people could access tertiary education and not just a privileged few, because she knew the profound impact education has on an individual, but also on the society more broadly.

PN68

My dad, a highly regarded and successful classical musician, and at times a career that's been shared also by my brother and my sister. And, yes, for anyone who wants to ask I was standing in the wrong aisle when they were handing out musical ability, which is a bit of a shame, but anyway.

PN69

The life of a musician, and indeed someone in the broader community, the arts community, is one typically characterised by multiple jobs, irregular and insecure work, but also a lack of recognition of the skills, training and expertise required in the creative arts field.

PN70

I was aware from a young age that many tended to see these skills through the prism of a hobby rather than a career. Failing to see the hours, the days, the months of practising and rehearsing, creating and producing that was required, so that we, all of us could experience a night at the opera, seeing our favourite band or a play, looking at the iconic laneway graffiti, or visiting a gallery, reading a book or listening to our favourite song.

PN71

So it does feel like a happy coincidence to be appointed to this Commission at a time when the Fair Work Commission is conducting a review into the arts and cultural sector, considering things like minimum rates, leave types and other terms commonplace for other workers. This early sense of the lack of recognition and unfairness sparked the fire in the belly and sent me on a path I think to representing workers, and I really want to thank my parents for that, and for the example that they have both led in their personal and professional lives.

PN72

That fire was further sparked when I started working at the SDA as an organiser whilst I was studying at university. I was lucky to learn the job from an absolute powerhouse of a woman, Dolores Whitmore, who was amazing, compassionate, fair, tough, member focused and taught me so much.

PN73

When I look back on that job there are some key things that I have learnt which have always stuck with me. One, there is usually at least three sides to every story. Two, you never know what someone might be going through in their personal lives, whether it's your member, whether it's a store manager, whether it's a HR person you are dealing with; you never know. And three, people want and need to be heard, which is an important part of the work this Commission does as people come here to tell their story and to be heard, and that's a responsibility I don't take lightly.

PN74

I had the benefit of working for SDA members in a number of roles, and have been afforded many amazing opportunities in my time at the union, and also within the broader union movement; in workplaces resolving issues, in senate hearings advocating for change, working with other unions, campaigning for gender equality at work and in retirement, in bargaining rooms trying to reach agreement, and also being part of the global trade union movement, sharing knowledge and experiences to ensure fairness and dignity at work.

PN75

On one of my first trips overseas for the union I was sent to Singapore to talk about health and safety in the retail industry. At the last minute I looked around my office and I saw a copy of our recently updated work health and safety guide on hazards in the retail industry. So I thought I will bring that along. Towards the end of the meeting I gave this document to the chair of the global meeting. That guide then went on to be adopted in a number of countries in the Asia Pacific region, and has since been translated into eight languages and has become law in Singapore; an example of the power of the global community and the sharing of knowledge.

PN76

Now, I love this quote about knowledge, aptly penned actually by a musician and author in the UK, and it's this: 'Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit, and wisdom is knowing that a tomato doesn't go in a fruit salad.' It's so true. You can have all the technical knowledge, but you have to know when and how to use it, and I have been the beneficiary of seeing that distinction by being in so many different environments and learning from so many people, too many to name, but I want to thank all my former colleagues, including those from across the table who have also been part of my journey.

PN77

I particularly want to thank the staff at the SDA national office; Gerard Dwyer, the national secretary, and all of the SDA executive past and present for their friendship and support over so many years.

PN78

When I decided to go back to study my Masters of Law I was able to go part-time. Little did my workplace or me know that my four year degree would end up taking seven years and nine days to complete, because two very beautiful little babies came along during this time, providing some light distraction from at times the tedious law books.

PN79

If studying with young babies taught me anything it was effective time management. Mum would come over and take Noah my son for a walk, and one hour meant 500 words on an assignment. Unfortunately that stat has declined in direct correlation with my age.

PN80

Upon returning to work after parental leave I started back one day a week, and then moved to two and then moved to three, subject to the childcare costs, and eventually I went back full-time. Without the flexibility and a steadfast support at my workplace I would not be here today. I especially want to thank Joe de Bruyn and Ian Blandthorn for that.

PN81

I also reflect upon the privilege that I was afforded, that of a supportive and flexible workplace. But it shouldn't be about privilege or luck, but rather about the systems and the structures that support our working lives. It has been a very fulfilling part of my paid working life to be involved with great people dedicated to addressing these structures and systems, such as paid parental leave, the right to flexible work, and work and care.

PN82

I particularly want to acknowledge Ian Blandthorn and two former SDA women officers, Therese Bryant and Katie Biddlestone, amazingly compassionate, hard working gender equality warriors. Thank you for your support, guidance and encouragement. I simply wouldn't be here without you.

PN83

In addition to my work at the SDA I have also had the privilege of being the director on the Board of Rest Superannuation, which really was a great learning experience for me, working with so many wonderful people in the profit to member superannuation, people united by a common purpose to ensure dignity in retirement for all working people. I want to thank Joseph Mitchell and all at the ACTU, and I also want to acknowledge and thank Lori-Anne Sharp and the late Senator Linda White, and acknowledge their great work, along with many, many other advocates in finally achieving superannuation on parental leave, which will happen from 1 July next year.

PN84

When I was appointed to this role a great mentor and friend of mine, Michael Tehan, someone who definitely knows not to put tomato in a fruit salad, sent me a very kind congratulatory email, which included a few things, the unique history of the institution, a fair go for all, but he also wrote about the 'how', and the performance of the role itself, and in particular about the importance of courtesy and respect in expressing views to people, and he said this:

PN85

*It is so important in a role where people appear before you, sometimes in distress, sometimes in a façade of confidence, sometimes angry and truculent, but where you will be dispensing justice and trying to help people live on with their lives.*

PN86

Wise words that I really hope to live by.

PN87

Finally, I want to thank our family and friends, especially those who have made the efforts to come from interstate. To my parents, and my brother Rory and my sister Kate thank you for your support, love and good humour. To my brother-in-law Nick and my niece Lana - thank you, Lana, for taking the day off school today - and to my boys. My husband James, there are simply no words. You are and have always been my biggest supporter, and you fill my heart with song. You have been such a wonderful co-pilot in this life together, especially in raising our two amazing boys. Thank you, and I love you.

PN88

To Noah and Hamish, such kind, hard working, compassionate and hilarious humans. You really do make me laugh. My gorgeous boys I love you so much and I am so proud of you. Thank you for the amazing hugs and unconditional love, it's the greatest. Thank you, Mr President.

PN89

JUSTICE HATCHER: Commissioner Redford.



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COMMISSIONER REDFORD: Thanks, President. I want to add my voice to the acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the lands upon which we meet today, and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

PN91

I also want to add my congratulations to Commissioner Fox. I had the opportunity to work with Commissioner Fox a couple of years ago on an ACTU working group around industrial law reform, and I was struck then as I continue to be by her passion and dedication, especially to issues around pay equity and gender equality, and some of that work that Commissioner Fox led contributed to really important improvements in the area of pay equity and gender equality that have occurred over recent years, including the insertion of the promotion of gender equality as an object of the legislation that governs this Fair Work Commission, and Commissioner Fox was integral to that work. She is an excellent addition to this Commission.

PN92

The implementation of some of those really important reforms is continuing here almost as we speak, and I can see we have been joined today in the courtroom by the Mighty Quokkas, which is the group of early childhood educators and union delegates who are representing their union and their workforce in the historic supported bargaining negotiations, which are literally going on right next door, and Deputy President Easton who is doing a fantastic job chairing that process has been kind enough to adjourn the proceedings to allow people to come to this sitting, and I thank him for that. I will come back to the Quokkas in just a few minutes.

PN93

I do want to thank Sarah for her kind words and through her the Minister and the government for their confidence in me in relation to this appointment, which I am very honoured to accept. I also want to thank Joe for his kind words. It's been a great honour for me to work with the ACTU team, particularly over the last few years, and I want to congratulate Sally and her team, Michelle, Michael Flynn, Ben Moxham who is here - thanks for being here, mate - and the rest of the team for all that they have achieved in recent times and thank them for their support for me over the years.

PN94

I also want to thank Jess for her kind words. I have always taken pride in having good relationships with people who I traditionally have been at the other end of the Bar table from, or across the other side of the negotiation table from. Those relationships I think are really important, and I have built lots of really great relationships with those colleagues, and I thank you, Jess, for those kind words.

PN95

When I was in probably my late teens I became a bit of a fan of the Australian author and raconteur Frank Hardy, and I know some of you are probably sitting there thinking about Frank's fondness for a cold beer and a trifecta, and that would probably be fair enough, but Frank wrote a book that I read as a youngster and always found really inspiring called *The Unlucky Australians*, and it's the story of the Gurindji people's strike at Wave Hill in the Northern Territory which occurred in the 60s, where a group of indigenous workers downed tools over land rights



and pay. Paul Kelly wrote a song about it that people might be familiar with. It was called From Little Things Big Things Grow.

PN96

Through Frank Hardy's book and Paul Kelly's song they helped give voice to the story of the Gurindji's leader Vincent Lingiari who never having been on a plane before or ever been to a big city was charged with the job of travelling Australia advocating his people's position in cities and towns all over the country, while his people were seven years on the grass in support of their cause.

PN97

Now, that story is not mine. It's not really even Frank Hardy's story or Paul Kelly's story, it's the Gurindji people's story. But like Frank Hardy or Paul Kelly, comparatively privileged white blokes with access to good education and family support, I always thought that that kind of job, the job of trying to use my middle class privilege to try and help people, no matter who they are, have a voice and get that voice heard, was a worthwhile thing to devote my time to.

PN98

So in the early 2000s I found myself at what was then the LHMU, a union descended from several, including the old Miscellaneous Workers' Union, the Miscos which was formed back in 1915 to make sure people like security officers and cleaners, many of whom are women, have voice at work and could get that voice heard on the job and in their industry.

PN99

When I got there, to the LHMU, I met a person who went on to become a friend and a mentor and a great source of inspiration to me, and that was Senator Jess Walsh, who is here today. Jess embodied then and still does a commitment to giving people a voice, whoever they are, and she challenged a bunch of us who came to that union to take on that mission of working with others, to stand up and speak out, and make positive changes in their working lives, and a number of those people are here today.

PN100

Another one of my heroes growing up was the great 20th century artist and thinker Jon Bon Jovi, and there are some lyrics from one of Jon's songs that I have always thought captured the vibe of that crew of us back at the LHMU when Jess first challenged us to take on that mission of devoting ourselves to helping with our members stand up and speak out, and Jon wrote:

PN101

*This ain't a song for the broken-hearted, no silent prayer for the faith-departed. I ain't gonna be just a face in the crowd, you're gonna hear my voice when I shout it out loud.*

PN102

And then it goes into the chorus, which is actually the good bit. But boy did we make some noise, and we achieved a lot, and I am really proud of those achievements, in cleaning, in hospitality, with casino workers, in contract security and in early childhood education and care, just to name a few of the groups that we work with, and I want to thank so much all that crew, including all of you who

are here today. You all mean so much to me and thanks for the chance to work with you.

PN103

Part of my job as part of that team of people was to come here to the Fair Work Commission with all those different kinds of workers that help them stand up and speak up and have their voice heard in this tribunal. There were times when sometimes that became all too literally the case.

PN104

I remember once appearing in one of these courtrooms and suddenly booming from the street below came the roar of 'Clean start right now', which meant proceedings had to be adjourned until the cries came from the street below again of 'We'll be back', and that's how I knew that the protest was about to end and we could resume. There's a pretty high chance that some of the culprits from that are here. Yes, I'm looking at you Andrew Jones.

PN105

Having said that in 25 years of appearing in this tribunal I have found that a person doesn't necessarily need a megaphone to be heard here, that this has over the time that I have been appearing here always been a place where people, no matter who they are, will get as much opportunity as anyone to have their voice heard and acknowledged.

PN106

And in the early days it was people like Commissioner Brendan Eames, Commissioner John Tolley, Commissioner Jim Simmonds and Commissioner Dominica Whelan, as she then was when I first appeared before her, and a number of others that made sure that whoever I was with down here, a young apprentice, a cleaner or security guard, whoever they were, got a fair chance to have their voice heard, and I have found in a couple of months that I have been here that that tradition continues to be held dear by the members of the Commission today.

PN107

Each is passionate about this being a place where anyone can get justice, and everyone has been so welcoming to me and generous with their time and mentorship, and I want to thank all of the members of the Commission led by the president for that support. I include within that thanks to all of the support staff led by Murray and the people who work at the Commission who have been so helpful, including my associate Nessa who has done a power of work to set up today. Thanks, Nessa.

PN108

Across the union and the movement there are too many people I came across and had the honour to work with to mention all of them. There are a whole range of people who through my journey in the movement led and inspired me. One though I do want to mention is Jo Schofield who is here, the current president of the United Workers' Union. I want to thank Jo for always being so generous and supportive to me, and pay tribute to her for continuing the proud tradition in that union of strong women leading the organisation, the UWU as it now is. I feel so privileged to have worked for you in that union.

PN109

It is through leadership like Jo's that the UWU continues to be at the forefront of the fight for pay equity and gender equality in our economy and in our community, and I feel so honoured to have been able to work on that cause with people like Jo and Jess, with people like Caroline Smith, Helen Gibbons, Sharon Caddie, Mel Gatfield, Lyndal Ryan, Demi Pnevmatikos, as well as the next generation of leaders leading that fight; the incredible Laura Stevens, Larissa Harrison and Bindi Smith, each of whom are also hear courtesy of Deputy President Easton's leave pass; Angela Oborn, the amazing Erin Keogh, and so many others, which brings me back to the Quokkas.

PN110

Now, the Quokkas are so named because every great team needs a mascot, and this is a great team, and has a great mascot in the form of a small furry quokka that often sits on the Bar table and assists the team in their advocacy for early childhood education and care professionals, and hopefully the quokka is here somewhere as well.

PN111

I was so proud to work with all of you, Bec, Jemma, Christine, Seb, Sia and Lisa, and I am so glad you're here, because for me you also represent so many other union delegates I was lucky to work with over the years, people who give up their time, often at great cost to them, to on behalf of others advocate so everyone they work with can get a voice, get a better shake at work and have a better life. All of you in that room next door are doing really important work, and so I am going to finish up soon so you can get back in there and get the job done.

PN112

In my personal life I have been really lucky to have incredible friends and family who have supported me along the way; our little westie crew, Sib, Al, Muzz, Rhiannon and Hally, the way we support each other when it's tough, challenge each other intellectually and on the tennis court, and mostly just have a lot of laughs is really important and it's so special you are here today.

PN113

The same goes to my family. I have an amazing family. I have been so lucky. Pretty much every second member of my family is a teacher, which has always kept me on my toes, but I want to acknowledge and thank my aunt Heather and uncles Des and Owen in particular for their support and inspiration over the years, and I also want to thank my wife's parents who have been a huge part of my life for over 30 years, Kaye and John, also both educators, and who have been so generous to me, along with my brother-in-law Michael in welcoming me into their family and being an amazing support and inspiration for so much of my life.

PN114

I also want to thank my mum and dad who are here. When I was really little I either wanted to be Dennis Lillee or my dad, and my dad's here and he is still my role model and my hero. Thanks, dad. And my mum - so my mum's a former teacher and school principal and was so for many years, and for me and my brother growing up it was so common as to not really even be that unusual if we were out somewhere with mum to get stopped in the street by a person we had

never met before and hear them tell our mum how much she had changed their lives when she taught them as their teacher or principal and how much she meant to them. I have always thought if I could have a positive influence on even half the number of people my mum has in her life I would be doing pretty all right.

PN115

I also want to thank my brother Nick who is here. We have always been really close, and you're an inspiration to me, mate. The way you get up every day and get the job done I think about it a lot. I think about your work ethic a lot, and you are more of an inspiration to me than I think you know, because we don't really talk like this normally. Thanks for being here today.

PN116

Finally to Benita and Harry and Evie. To Harry and Evie, congratulations to you both on getting a day off school today. It is so tempting while I am sitting up here to give you both one of my amazing lectures, or drop one of my many pearls of fatherly wisdom that I know you love so much, because you just have to sit there and pretend to listen, but you get enough of that at home. I just want to say thank you to you both for being such incredible people. Me and mum couldn't do what we do if you weren't the kids that you are. Thanks for being people who love life, who devour it and all it has to offer with enthusiasm and passion and who are always up for a laugh however bad the jokes are. I love you both a lot.

PN117

Finally my wife Benita. Everyone who knows us knows how quickly the Ben Redford train would be lying at the side of the tracks if it wasn't for Benita. In fact Benita actually even offered to write this speech for me. I'm not sure if anyone's ever seen that Steve Carell Golden Globe speech that he gave where his wife who's an American comedian Nancy Walls wrote the speech for him.

PN118

So he found himself during the entire speech basically giving tribute to his wife the whole time, because she had written the speech for him. Look, if that's what had happened here as Benita did propose, if I just spent the entire time thanking her in different ways, frankly that would not have even done her half the amount of justice that she deserves. So thank you.

PN119

I just want to thank everyone for their support throughout the years. You should have no doubt that in my role on this Commission I will hold true to the values you have instilled in me, and I will do my best not to let you down.

PN120

JUSTICE HATCHER: On behalf of all of my colleagues I would like to congratulate Commissioner Fox and Commissioner Redford on their appointments. I thank everyone who has attended here today, both those who spoke at the Bar table and everyone who attended as guests.

PN121

I am informed that the staff of the Commission have kindly organised a morning tea on Level 7, so you are all invited to attend. I extend that invitation to the Quokkas, and I am sure Deputy President Easton will allow sufficient time for

you to have a cup of tea. So thank you all for your attendance and we will now adjourn.

**ADJOURNED INDEFINITELY**

**[10.26 AM]**