

Comment by Michael C H Jones

What can I say? Whatever, it will be wrong. And wrong from every political ideology or religious theology and just plain "incorrect".

I used to tell my very feminist wife of 31 years, Janice who unfortunately died suddenly about 12 years ago, that I personally could not be held responsible for thousands of years of history - change it in the future perhaps but stop the guilt tripping. We always worked as a team and she often took the lead/credit benefiting from my work - I cite the anti-apartheid campaign in 1971, some of her papers in her Diploma of Jurisprudence at Sydney Law School in the 1980s and at least one - the unpublished one of three - of her edited books for the old NSW High School Legal Studies Level 3 course in the mid 1990s. I of course fully acknowledge the enormous amount of support/backroom work she did - and also my mother - during the anti-conscription/Vietnam war campaign of the 1960s, my corporate and ALP work in the 1970/80s, the Australia-Southern Africa Business Council and Australia China Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the 1990s. Like many wives with 'high profile' husbands she got to hate 'rubber' chicken, businessmen and politicians.

So would she approve the current women 'leaders'. I believe the principles yes but the reality know. As with another who shall not be named I think her reaction would be that she did not work for 30/40 years for women's opportunity/equality/success only to see this lot, admittedly with a few exceptions, achieve their positions. Moreover, is it any more healthy to have all women rather than all men in these senior government positions re PM, GG, Premier, Mayor etc even presuming they got there on merit - then again did all the men get there on merit? So the celebration needs to be muted and a little humility called for - I will not mention too loudly the concept of 'tokenism'.

Well may you ask: what has this to do with China, domestic or throughout Indauspac? An Observation - too brief to be written up and an idea about which some academic has/will write a 700 page book - is that in the 1990s when receiving Chinese delegations in Australia, or visiting cities throughout the mainland - I gave out over 50,000 business cards in my first 7 years as President and then lost count (one member company Shangri-la Hotels printed 25,000) - the number of women participants with high positions under the old communist structures was quiet surprising. However with the development of the socialist market and the introduction of automatic retirement rules for senior personnel over the last decade there has been a dramatic fall in their number - now stastics as always may prove me wrong but that is my experience.

So what am I saying re realities and not ideals. The competitive market whether capitalist or socialist, the responsibilities of government no matter what sort of democracy - open or closed, or the climb to academic publishing heights - speeches or books, means serious impacts on traditional family life re the two kids and the quarter acre block. Choices have to be made and men still cannot give birth although technology will surely change that. Hence nurturing and child raising - women cannot avoid the issue unless you are like our Prime Minister and choose not to have any.

Similarly many women but likely to remain a very small percentage are about to undertake the most extreme functions of the Australian armed forces - front line combat if they are physically capable. I hope the Taliban in Afghanistan or the other Muslim insurgents throughout West Asia understand - they must be highly confused by the shenanigans in our navy. You can not easily identify a gay but you can a woman. Even allowing for modern warfare, and the requirements of logistics in all forms, the principle remains no matter how narrowly defined - there are some things women can not or should not do and similarly with men.

Modern self proclaimed feminists push the envelope well beyond credulity and take their issues to being almost grotesque. I happily remain 'sexist' as I do not believe in the femininisation of young men - it is not in my view a healthy trend.