Ms Graham, President of the Society, Committee members of the Society, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered, the Gadigal people of the mighty Eora Nation and I pay my respects to their elders past, present and future and also acknowledge any indigenous people present.

It is a tremendous honour to be invited this evening, somewhat daunting I have to say! Luckily I am joined by my eldest daughter this evening, Taylor who is one of your junior members.

When David Gronow (who also happens to be my Father in Law) rang me to invite me to speak I naturally enquired as to the framing – “The address is usually about twenty minutes in duration and can be of a general and light-hearted nature.”

So I thought I needed a bit more inspiration...

The fundamental purpose of your society is to “…discuss and debate matters of mutual interest”, still not much guidance!

Then I read through the Inaugural Address to your Society by the Hon. Mr Justice Bonney on 19th September 1947 and 2 paragraphs jumped out at me:

“They respect and have confidence in the man who will tell them plain facts in plain language”

And

To mould public opinion “there are two essentials, we must take the public into our confidence and not treat them as people whose interest in curiosity should be suppressed, secondly we must gain the trust of the public in ourselves and our knowledge, even above their trust in Astrologists.”

So, I am going to speak directly and address an issue very much in the contemporary domain of trust and confidence.

I am 54 years old, White, happily married to Lisa for 25 years and we have 3 great children. I was born and raised in South Africa, UK and Australia in warm and loving family. I also enjoyed a wonderful education.

I joined the Medical Technology industry straight from my Science degree at Sydney University and 32 years later I can honestly say I have never had a bad day at work. We have the privilege of working with our Customers (generally Surgeons, Nurses and Hospitals) to serve the patients of Australia.

Since 1997 I have worked for the world’s leading health care company Johnson & Johnson, recently moving from Australia/NZ CEO to an Asia Pacific role leading Education.
As you may notice I have never been hungry (!), without clothes or indeed love. In fact, I have never known discrimination of any description!

For many reasons therefore I have always subscribed to the maxim “to whom much is given, much shall be required”

Tonight I would like to share with you the imperative of Gender Equality in Australia and some of my experiences as a Male Champion of Change.

Unfortunately one does not have to look very hard for evidence of obvious Gender Inequality. In June the chief executive of Qatar Airways, Akbar Al Baker, moments after becoming chair of the aviation industry body’s board of governors for a one-year term, was asked at a press conference in Sydney what could be done to tackle the lack of women in Middle East aviation. Al Baker replied this was not the case at Qatar Airways, before adding: “Of course, it has to be led by a man, because it is a very challenging position.”

Obviously Qatar and the Middle East is different to Australia, or is it?

In 2017, Australia was ranked 35th on a global index measuring gender equality, slipping from a high point of 15th in 2006.

Across Australia, women continue to be significantly under-represented in parliament and executive government, comprising less than one-third of all parliamentarians and one-fifth of all ministers.

According to the Human Rights Commission:

Women make up 50% of the population (amazing statistic!) and 47% of employees but take home $251 per week less than men. The current national pay gap is 15.3% and has remained between and 15% and 19% for 20 years.

In 2015-2016 the average Australian woman was reaching retirement with an average of $113,660 less superannuation than the average male. As a result, women are more likely to experience poverty in their retirement years and be far more reliant on the Age Pension.

Women account for 68% of primary carers for older people and people with disability.

95% of primary parental leave is taken by women, and women spend almost three times as much time taking care of children each day, compared to men.

Women are over-represented as part-time workers in low-paid industries and in insecure work and continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles in the private and public sectors.

More than one in three Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence in her lifetime and one in two experiences sexual harassment.

As an interesting aside one of the great insights Michael Kimmel, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at Stony Brook University (just outside New York) provided to a recent conversation with Male Champions of Change was the question of why is the #MeToo movement is different to any previous gender-based issues, and his answer was simple yet deeply moving – because women are being believed.
In the world of Business and according to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and Australian Institute of Company Directors:

Men out earn women in every industry category

38% of companies now analyse their gender pay data

Women make up 16.5% of CEO’s, 29.7% of Key Management Positions and 38.4% of Managers

AICD have set a target of 30% Directors on ASX 200 Boards – in 2017 70/200 had achieved the 30%

13.7% of ASX 200 companies had a female Chair

Now let’s explore the world of Medicine and Law:

For some years both disciplines have achieved gender parity at the graduate level, however with very few exceptions this is where the good news ends.

Women make up 11% of Fellows of the RACS – ranging from a high of 20% in Pediatrics to a low (can anyone guess) in Orthopaedics of 3%.

In 2017 at RACS women made up 22% of new Fellows, 29% of Surgical Trainees and 25% of major committee members.

12.5% of hospitals with >1000 beds have a female CEO.

28% of medical schools have a female Dean.

33% of State and Federal Chief Medical or Health Officers are female.

In a study across 334 members of the Association of Women Surgeons gender discrimination was experienced by 87% at medical school, 88% in residency and 91% in practice.

Female GP’s earn 25% less than their male counterparts and 54% less if they have children

WA Chief Justice Wayne Martin, on his recent retirement, expressed his concern at the “serious under-representation” of women at senior levels in the profession.

The High Court is a notable exception with 4 women of 7 Judges with other higher Courts varying between 18% and 39% women Judges.

27% of major Law firm Partners are women, and this drops to 10% with Equity Partners

Law Society has reached gender parity however the Bar Association is 22% which drops to 8% at Senior Counsel.

Let me apologise to those of you that were already familiar with these quite stark proof points of the Gender Inequality in Australia, in all aspects of society and across all industries and professions.

Now let me try and put case why Gender Equality is so important:
Those of you with a son, nephew or grandson named Peter, congratulations because he will have a greater chance of becoming CEO of one of Australia’s leading companies than all of your daughters, nieces and granddaughters! In my mind that illustrates the first reason why Gender Equality is so important – the great Australian value of a fair go. For the life of me I cannot accept why my son should have any greater opportunity than either of my daughters.

In late 2015 Canada’s new prime minister Justin Trudeau named a young and ethnically diverse cabinet, with a ministerial team that for the first time in the country’s history was equally balanced between men and women. “It’s important to be here before you today to present to Canada a cabinet that looks like Canada,” Trudeau, 43, told reporters soon after he was officially sworn-in as the country’s 23rd prime minister – the second-youngest in its history. Asked to explain his gender parity promise, he answered: “Because it’s 2015.” So the second reason is about community expectations and “you can’t be what you can’t see”.

In 2015 the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. My third reason is one of Human Rights.

Speaking of prosperity, and as a business leader this close to my heart, there is clear economic advantage in a Gender Equal world. As the McKinsey Global Institute published in 2015 – the world economy would increase by $12 Trillion over the next decade if each country managed to narrow the Gender gap at the pace of the best performing economy in their region. On this analysis India would garner the biggest benefit of any country. At a more tangible level Gender diverse teams produce better results, from both an innovation and financial standpoint. As the lead Partner of one Australia’s largest Law firms said “there is no debate on the benefits of (gender) diversity”, with a small caveat that Professional Services firms don’t believe it just yet! Fourth therefore is the economic benefits to all of us.

I was lucky enough to attend a dinner a few weeks back with David Gonski as the speaker. Incredibly we invest $1 Billion a week into our Education system – so how dumb are we not ensuring 50% of our population have the same opportunity as the other 50% to attend the tertiary or vocational course of their choice, or start their own business, or become an Orthopaedic Registrar, or become a Senior Counsel. In other words let’s get more aggressive about reaping a dividend from our investment.

If we now take all of these advantages/benefits, what do we need to be doing to move the needle much further along the Gender Equality continuum.

- Leadership is essential and this starts with Awareness and Acknowledgement.
- Aspirations need to set and appropriate KPI’s and metrics put in place to measure progress
- Undertake your own Pay Audit
- Increase opportunities in the “middle” of people’s careers
- Rethink current work practices with a frame of what will work versus what has worked
- Review and analyse your recruitment practices
- Nothing shifts your thinking like a client or customer who insists on working with like minded Gender Equality committed organisations
As an example my organisation has done the following:

- Strong leadership and role modelling – about 70% of companies have an overall Gender Equality strategy
- Flexible work practices – about 70% of Australia companies promote flexible work
- Parental leave program for males and females – both primary and secondary carer leave
- Unconscious Bias Training – nearly 100,000 people across the world
- Development programs for early career talent
- Sponsorship programs for senior talent
- Gender balanced interview panels and blind CV review
- Credo Surveys – measure the How as opposed to the What
- Senior leader metrics to ensure accountability

There are certainly some positive signs in the Medical and Legal world:

AMA and RACS have flexible training policies and programs

RACS is implementing their Operate with Respect manifesto

RACS have set targets – Women should make up 40% of Trainees by 2021 and 40% of Board/Committee appointments by 2020

Major Law firm has 35% Partner target

Baker McKenzie national managing partner Anthony Foley said: "Like many firms, we are seeking to urgently address gender equality in our firm and profession. We know that one of the most important steps we can take is to support our female lawyers progress to partnership and leadership positions."

“There is a considerable advantage to have the Fellowship of our College reflect the diversity of the community that we are privileged to serve. This means that we have to identify and address any impediments in our systems that prevent capable people from being selected and trained to be surgeons. There is undoubted gender inequality that is reflected in almost all specialties, some more than others. There is a significant inequity of Indigenous Australian and Māori surgeons. This document outlines our commitment to assist all interested medical graduates in our communities to choose a surgical career with confidence and equity for all.”

Mr Phil Truskett, President of RACS, endorsing the RACS Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

Elizabeth Broderick, our former Sex Discrimination Commissioner and now United Nations Special Rapporteur leading the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women, established one of the most significant responses to Gender Inequality in Australia with the formation of Male Champions of Change.

The heart of The Male Champions of Change strategy involves men of power and influence forming a high profile coalition to achieve change on gender equality issues in organisations and communities.
Our approach is to Listen, Learn and Lead through Action.

And we operate with 4 Guiding Principles:

1. Step up beside women
2. Prioritise achieving progress on women’s representation
3. Stand behind our numbers, sharing lessons learned
4. Shift the system, not “fix women”

MCC now comprises over 150 leaders organised into 9 groups.

In our most recent report, co-authored with Chief Executive Women, titled “Backlash and Buy-in: Responding to the Challenges in Achieving Gender Equality” there were some insightful comments:

- Responses to gender equality vary. There is support for work in gender equality. There is also resistance. Backlash comes in many forms – we have experienced it in our organisations, we have seen it at all levels and, indeed, we have read and heard it reported in the media in recent months.

- It’s not new, it’s not always obvious, it can be confronting and it requires a human response. We are not here today to debate if backlash exists we are here to talk about what we as leaders have done and will do to continue to drive buy-in in our organisations, and with the community at large.

- Whilst we are encouraged by the progress happening in organisations and the support for work in gender equality we also experience backlash. This is to be expected. It means we are making progress. This is not just an Australian phenomenon but part of the global picture.

- We see public figures who speak out on gender equality and women’s rights being exposed to responses which are much more politicised and more personal than in the past.

- Bringing about change requires persistent and immense courage. It also calls for change makers to engage with the range of responses documented in the report. Managing backlash is never easy - it’s about making space for all views, particularly those that are opposed to progressing gender equality. It is only then that leaders can understand how collectively we can drive buy-in.

- Our role as leaders is twofold—to use our profile and position to bring leadership to the issues, but also, and most importantly, to use our power and influence to impact change.

- We still have a distance to go

- Let’s agree to maintain the momentum, deal constructively with resistance in our own organisations and take the opportunity to demonstrate the value of gender equality to the community at large.

As Liz Broderick says “Gender equality is the unfinished business of the 21st century.” I hope you will all, men and women, join with me in moving our great country towards Gender Equality.

Thank You