**Elizabeth Proust: Advancing women in leadership**

My personal philosophy is to make a difference, and that means in the workplace – the people I work with or the shareholders or for taxpayers – and if you can do that and have some fun along the way, then life’s pretty good.

To make a difference to the city of Melbourne in the CEO role for five years in the early 1990s stands out for me because it was a renovator’s opportunity, it was a great opportunity to make some significant changes for this great city and I think it will always be at least one of the highlights.

I think it’s important when you’re working to think about people who are not as well off, or to think about other pursuits, and I’ve always been involved in something in addition to work and the family, in the arts in universities and in charities and I think making a difference is something I’ve always wanted to do, and that’s one way of doing it for me.

I think in 2013 women still face many of the same challenges that I did at the beginning of my career, and I think if you and I had been talking 30 something years ago then I would not have thought that we’d still be facing those same issues. There’s not really enough women in senior management or on boards – that’s changing but too slowly. It’s an enormous waste of talent quite apart from anything else, and I think especially in the private sector more so than the public sector women are still facing significant discrimination, usually more subtle than a few years ago, based on gender alone not on their ability and I think that’s still a significant but perhaps hidden problem women face.

I did my honours degree at La Trobe, it was still - and this is the early 70s – a relatively new university, a great time to be at university pre-hex, and I remember the debates, the caliber of the people who taught me, and just the physical space that was La Trobe University.