



Fiona Barber

Manager Better Business,
Tourism Tasmania

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Before joining Tourism Tasmania, I had spent my entire career working in the Arts. I started my working life as an actor, then I decided I wanted to get paid every week, so I did a postgraduate degree in Arts Management and worked as CEO and General Manager of two performing arts organisations. I joined the state service 11 years ago, as Manager of Industry Development Programs at Arts Tasmania and I've been in my current job now for two and a half months.

Ten years ago, if someone had told me I would end up working in Tourism, I would have said, 'No way!' But the interesting thing for me has been realising that understanding government is a really transferrable skill. It's about knowing the process of how government works: the relationship between the bureaucracy and the ministers, the governance and compliance requirements, the language, the networks, and how that whole jigsaw fits together. That is a real benefit of working in the State Service, that transferability. My current role as Manager Better Business has taken the strengths I developed in my previous roles and just overlaid them onto a new industry.

This was the first job that I went for outside the Arts. For me it has felt like a really smooth

transition, because I've got that really strong grounding in government. My career has been defined by decades: in my 20s I was an actor, in my 30s I ran arts organisations, in my 40s I came to government and now, in my 50s, I'm pursuing this new challenge. I feel like at the end of whatever this period is, I'll have a new skillset in a new industry, which just expands my opportunities.

The best part about this job is the opportunity to make a difference, to make things work better. I've got a very logical brain, which never quite worked when I was an actor. I love the process of being able to take something that isn't quite working, change it around and deliver an outcome – to actually see that it makes a difference, and builds personal and organisational capacity and capability.

I think sometimes as women we undersell ourselves. Talk to other people, get a realistic and objective perspective of your skillset, where your strengths are and where you might need more development. If you've got half the skills required for a job, I'd say go for it because you never know what an employer is looking for. You can always develop skills, but you can't develop attributes. You might be just what they're looking for, so don't limit your ambition.