

our *state* our *future* 

**WORKING FOR
TASMANIA**

*Women in
the Tasmanian
State Service*

Introduction

Acknowledgement

This publication is possible because of the participation of the women who generously shared their stories and the support of their workplaces.

'Women in the Tasmanian State Service Career Narratives' was commissioned by the Head of the State Service as part of the Heads of Departments' commitment to Gender Diversity in the Tasmanian State Service. Narratives were collected by Dr Meraiah Foley - UNSW Canberra, Public Service Research Group, School of Business, June 2018.

The Tasmanian State Service offers a wide range of diverse and exciting career opportunities across Tasmania.

The 16 inspirational women who share their stories in this publication represent the valued contribution that many women make across the State Service. At varying levels in the Service, and at different stages in their careers, they are all undertaking work that makes Tasmania a better place to live, makes a difference in people's lives and delivers valuable services to the community.

'Women in the Tasmanian State Service' highlights the diversity and richness a career in the Tasmanian State Service can offer and aims to inspire and influence a variety of women, including their aspirations, career choices and attitudes about non-traditional careers.



Fiona Barber

Manager Better Business,
Tourism Tasmania

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The best part about this job is the opportunity to make a difference, to make things work better.
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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.

Nicky Corbett

Conservation Project Officer,
Port Arthur Historic Site

I studied archaeology at the University of Sydney and was starting my Honours year in 2010 when I first came to Port Arthur to do a three-week summer archaeology program. When a job came up for an archaeologist at Port Arthur four years later, I jumped at it. I was really lucky to get the position and moved here in 2014. I had wanted to be an archaeologist since I was five years old.

My job at Port Arthur is quite complex, and every day is different. We are quite a small team, so a day in my job might entail looking after our asset management system, doing some Geographic Information System mapping, overseeing procurement, or helping our interpretation team with some of their plans for the site. The biggest challenge of my job is keeping up with all my tasks. We're all working towards the one goal, which is preserving the site for the future, but there are so many bits and pieces to get there, it can be quite chaotic at times.

Occasionally I still get to do bits of 'real' archaeology and get my hands dirty, although that's not really my role any more. I like finding the really personal artefacts, like shoes or toothbrushes—not necessarily the most glamorous things, but objects that somebody used and were part of their life. They tell the stories of the people who were here. Probably the coolest thing I ever found was a key.

We never figured out where it came from, but I like to think it was one of the prison keys.

I have bipolar disorder and that can sometimes make work challenging. I'm lucky in that Port Arthur has been one of the most supportive workplaces I've ever had. They are so accepting. I've recently started a new scheme where I work from home on a Wednesday and already I'm feeling that's made a big difference in terms of my work-life balance and health. The flexible work arrangement was actually recommended by my Director. It's been a really great place to work.

My advice to a young professional would be don't be afraid to take a slightly crooked career trajectory. I started out my career working for a local council in heritage and town planning, and it was that experience in planning that got me my next job in heritage conservation, which got me my job here in archaeology. While it was a fairly roundabout way to get here, I would say don't be afraid to take those opportunities even if they might not seem at the time like that straight arrow to where you want to be. Just keep your eye out for opportunities and go for them. I didn't think I would get this job at Port Arthur, at all. I'd say just keep putting yourself forward and never stop learning new skills.

This the best job I've ever had. I love it here.

“
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stop learning
new skills.**
”



Alisa Denne

Manager, Sports Programs,
Tasmanian Institute of Sport

I am responsible for the successful delivery of strategic, financial and management outcomes for the Tasmanian Institute of Sport (TIS) Sports Programs.

Day to day, this is done in collaboration with program coaches, athlete service providers and TIS administrators – ensuring our athletes receive the right support, enabling them to succeed in their chosen sport and life in general. Further, my role is to work in partnership with state and national sporting organisations to ensure each sport program is delivered in alignment with the sport's priorities and expectations. There are a lot of relationships at play and a lot of moving parts requiring collaboration, problem solving and trust – making for a dynamic and challenging job.

The combination of previous job roles, life experiences and education brought me to my current role. Police Officer, coaching life-saving courses, sports coach, working on domestic and family violence policy, staff development (human resource development), uni student and elite athlete are some of the 'hats' I have worn along the way.

My time as an elite athlete (nearly eight years) culminated in my selection for the 2004 Athens Olympics. Unfortunately, a significant training injury a few weeks before the team departed for the Games prevented me from taking part. It was a heartbreaking experience. My time as an athlete set a strong foundation to lean on in my current role – an appreciation of the athlete highs and lows,

of the quest to be at their best, to be the best. Similarly, my background in staff development ties in well with my current job. How do we get to where we want to be? This question is applicable whether assisting to develop staff or athletes.

I've always been a proud Tasmanian and eager for Tasmanian sports people to have opportunities to succeed. In general terms, I have a passion for human performance and continuous improvement – learning and striving, and opportunities to assist others to develop and work at their best. At an individual level, I believe this can build job satisfaction and in turn performance. Better performing individuals improve teams and can transform organisations. In any of the teams I have ever worked or played in, the most successful have this innate understanding that our strength is in our differences, not our similarities – with a genuine commitment to working together - capitalising on the combined skills, knowledge and experiences of many.

I'm a believer in short-term "mentor/buddy systems" – supporting those just starting out in a job or returning to the workplace after an extended period of leave. Having a mentor/buddy minimises the potential for feeling like you're alone 'out on a limb'. In terms of career advice, I would say: seek out role models. Authentic, genuine role models in our organisations are of huge value as sources of inspiration – about whom you can proudly say: 'Yes, I want to be just like that!'

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Jenny Dodd

Chief Executive Officer,
TasTAFE

I started my career as a marketer working for a number of Australian businesses. While my career was going well in those years the conditions were not very flexible. So when I decided to start a family, I decided to transition to education. I completed a Graduate Diploma of Education while working in private and community training organisations until I secured a casual teaching position with the Canberra Institute of Technology on just two hours per week. From there, over twenty years, I held many positions including Director Marketing, Director Education, and in 2013, Chief Executive Officer. In mid-2014 I moved to TAFE Queensland as General Manager Gold Coast. I became CEO of TasTAFE in February 2018. I think one of the core messages of my story is to grasp opportunity when it comes. But also, be ready for the opportunity because sometimes you can grasp it too early, when the other demands of your life aren't aligned. At each stage of my career, I was ready to take a next level of responsibility.

To be a good leader, I believe you need to know your business. You need to read about it, you need to write about it, and you need to be prepared to present about it. I see myself as first and foremost a professional in education. You also need a sense of purpose. Every day that I come to work I do something that I think is important. We change lives in vocational education and training and we

work with industry to make sure they've got the workforce they need. That to me, is fundamental.

You also need people around you who know their bit of the business. You need to trust your team, and you need to delegate. You have to know who you can trust, I'm very upfront with the people I work with and trust. Be prepared to work hard and to gain knowledge and qualifications where you need to. People need to see you doing that, but you also need to be authentic in how you do that. Do the things you say you're going to do, and only do the things you're prepared to live with.

You also need to listen, and listen deeply to others, absorb information and then pave the way for what needs to happen. Remember to be kind in how you deal with others, and also as you work hard, be kind to yourself. These were lessons I learnt later in my career.

The best part of my job is working with a group of people who share the same purpose, which is providing vocational education and training. There is meaning in my job, and there is meaning in the jobs of the 800 staff here at TasTAFE—we all share that common purpose. This is a great place to work. You can be pretty authentic when you have that sense of purpose.

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Franny Dorney

Graduate Policy Officer,
Tasmanian State Service Graduate Program

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I've been in my role for one year and three months. I did my undergraduate in International Relations and European Studies here in Tasmania, and ended up moving to Melbourne, where I did a Masters of International Development Practice and worked for a medical aid charity for a few years. However, I was always interested in public policy, and wanted to move home, so I applied for the graduate program. Usually, people enter the graduate program straight out of university, but it took me a bit longer to find my way here.

A typical day in my job varies a lot. As a policy graduate you're given a lot of different tasks. You might start by doing some research in the morning (at the moment, I'm researching some women's fact sheets) then spend the afternoon writing up a report or working with other agencies to get their input on a briefing for the Secretary or Minister. Yesterday I monitored Question Time, listening to the political context and keeping up with what's going on, and transcribing the questions for the broader Department's information. It's really mixed, and it can change from day to day or week to week. As a graduate you also rotate in different divisions, so you get a lot of different work experiences.

It's a great program for many reasons. You come in with a whole bunch of other graduates, you do

training together and you build up those horizontal networks. It's been easy to make friends and learn from each other. You get a lot of support all round. For example, people further up the chain will take you along to high-level meetings so you get exposure to that level of strategic or interagency discussion, or they earmark an interesting task as a great opportunity for a graduate to take on. In my experience you get both the opportunities and the encouragement to show what you, uniquely, are made of. It's been amazing.

On a personal level, including as an introvert, seeing that in the State Service there is no one mould for a 'good leader' – that twenty different people might approach the same role in a different but equally effective way – has been a powerful thing. Seeing the diversity of people leading is very important to me – showing that there's not one model you have to fit. For me, that makes the difference between admiring and aspiring.

I'm really enjoying the State Service. There is so much room for growth. You can have a really diverse and fulfilling career here, even if you stayed in the State Service for your entire 40 or 50 year career. It's full of opportunities, and there are so many inspiring people about – it makes you excited to go to work and see where it takes you.

Kate Garvey

Manager of Partnership Development,
Public Health Services

I have worked in Public Health Services for five years now, in a variety of roles.

I have been in my current position for about two years. When I first joined the Tasmanian State Service, I was working in the ACT when I got a phone call about a maternity leave locum. I was on maternity leave myself, but the manager said they could be really flexible. It was a temporary opportunity to manage the health equity team, and that was something that really interested me. I flew down to Tasmania and spent two hours talking to the manager, and she held my baby most of the time. I started one day a week, and then two days a week. It was a really flexible working environment. I was doing strategic planning sessions in the office with my baby in a front pack!

I'm a speech pathologist by training, and I've done a degree in anthropology and political economics as well as masters degrees in public health and health service management. The majority of my career, however, I've worked in public health, mostly in the policy space.

I really like the contact with people and being able to identify the system level barriers to giving people environments that enable good health and wellbeing and ensuring the healthcare system gives people what they need when they need it. I'm also interested in the role of local government in public health and how we support the important

actions of our partners. Even though Tasmania is a small state, we have an equal voice in national-level policy mechanisms. It's about how we leverage that voice, to enable people to do what they need to do at the ground level.

The biggest challenge in this role is that I'm really interested in everything. So if somebody says, 'Can you do this?' I will always say yes. Relationships are really important to me and following through on what you say you're going to do, but there are only so many hours in the day and I have three small children. It's kind of a question of how to fit all that together and maintain your sanity. It's about consolidating and communicating what you are doing and engaging a wide range of perspectives on an issue. One of the most important roles I have is to create work environments that help people to flourish. I work with some amazing people both within and external to my organisation and that is what sustains me. Public health is a long game but I'm in it for the long haul.

If I were to advise a young professional, I would say: demand the work conditions that you need. Everywhere I have worked, I have pushed the issue about flexibility. More than that, I've also created the conditions for other people by making it policy. If you give people flexibility, they're at their best and everyone benefits.

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Dr Jodi Glading

Deputy Chief Medical Officer,
Department of Health

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I really love my job. It involves a lot of problem solving and strategising—you get to engage in a lot of forward, future thinking.

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I have been with the Department of Health since 2016. As Deputy Chief Medical Officer, I have a variety of roles. I am in charge of the clinical governance section, research governance and assist with disaster management and planning; ethical, technical, and clinical advisory questions. About half of my role involves dealing with state-level issues, and the other half is federal.

My career path to this job was really varied. At university, I studied psychology, and later did a Masters in Clinical Psychology. Then I worked as a criminal psychologist in the prison system but that wasn't for me. Eventually, I decided to go to medical school because I had always had an interest in medicine. My prevocational years were in surgery and then as a registrar in ophthalmology, and I was miserable! It was great doing your first couple surgical procedures, but then it became very transactional. I thought: 'I can't do this for another 20 years.' I decided I really wanted to do something that focused on the policy or business-side of medicine, and eventually I ended up in medical management and then this role.

I really love my job. It involves a lot of problem solving and strategising—you get to engage in a lot of forward, future thinking. In five years' time how do we want the funding to look like? What do we

want to do differently today that positively impacts on the hospital systems of tomorrow? You don't really get to do that a lot in surgery. This job ticks a lot of boxes for me.

Working in Tasmania, a relatively small state, I have a breadth of responsibilities, which I enjoy. At the same time, I have a massive portfolio. It means that I have to be across a broad range of issues, which three or four people might be doing in other jurisdictions. There aren't a whole lot of other experts here to share the load—there's often nobody to handball your tasks to. That's probably my biggest challenge.

My advice for a young professional would be to keep your options open. I'm so glad that I did. When I was unhappy in ophthalmology, I was willing to ask people: what should I do, where should I go? It can also be extremely helpful to find yourself a mentor, someone who has navigated your career space before. It's not just helpful in terms of understanding the practical side of your career; it can also be reassuring to know that it can be done. It's just that moral boost to show that it is possible to have whatever kind of career you want.

Geraldine Hayes

Superintendent,
Launceston Reception Prison

I've worked with the Prison Service for almost 16 years, and I'm coming up to three years as the superintendent of Launceston Reception Prison. I started out my career in the mining industry, and then I went to work for the trade union movement. A friend of mine then said, 'Why don't you look at prisons?' I went to an information night, and I thought it looked interesting, so I took a month's annual leave from my job, and I started working at the prison. From day one, I knew this is where I wanted to be.

I like the structure. I also like the uniform, to be honest – not having to think about what to wear to work every day! I also have a belief that something I might say or do might change someone's life one day. I think that we should attempt in the prison service to have that positive impact on people.

What we want to get away from is the stigma of prison officers as bullies. What we want to get across is that, yes, people do end up in prison, but we can have an impact just by modeling good behaviour. It's as simple as that. A lot of our prisoners have never had a conversation with a woman which hasn't involved violence, drugs, rape, sexual assault, all those things. As a female, that's something we can bring to the table. We can bring a professional face to show prisoners that you can talk to women about general things.

It's about making a difference, but realistically. You're not going to cure the world. There are

going to be prisons forever whether we like it or not. It's what we do with people while they are in prison that is so important.

It can be quite lonely. I am the second highest ranked uniformed female officer in the state, and there are only two senior managers who are females. I create my own supports by travelling to Hobart, to connect with my peers and receive support. It can be extremely isolating, both as a leader, and as a woman working in the prison service.

Prisons are dangerous places. We are all hyper alert. It just does change your life. Before you even consider a career in prisons and prison management, you need to be extremely resilient yourself. From my point of view, you don't last 16 years in the prison service, male or female, unless you are resilient. You learn how to cope with the stress, and you learn how to bounce back.

If I were to give advice to a young professional in this field, I would say: seek a champion, and surround yourself with people who can assist you in your career. Don't expect for it to be handed to you on a platter. If you want it, fight for it and take it, because it's your right. If you have the skills and ability, it's your right to have a role as a supervisor, or a superintendent, or a director of prisons, whatever it is. Don't be told no. If you want it, go out and fight for it.



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For me, it isn't about the money. It's about the personal achievement of people looking in and saying we're doing a good job. I believe we're all here to look after each other.
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Colleen Horton

Deputy Manager, House Services,
Launceston General Hospital

I started working in this hospital 32 years ago, when I was employed as a cleaner. After about 8 months, I moved up to the position of training supervisor for cleaning within the hospital. About one year later, I became the Assistant Manager of cleaning services, and my role has just evolved from there. I've been in my current role for about 25 years. Part of my portfolio includes managing a staff of 130 people.

My passion has always been educating our staff to see themselves as an important part of the hospital – that the cleaning of a hospital is terribly important, that a cleaner can be as important as a doctor, or anybody else working here. Everybody's health depends on how healthy our patients are when they leave here, and that depends on how clean the hospital is.

With my former manager, we really worked hard over the years to professionalise the cleaning department. And every time we did a good job, we got rewarded by getting another department brought under our supervision. Our department, House Services, is now eight departments: cleaning, medical orderlies, security, telephone and communications, accommodation, parking and, most recently, transport.

In my eyes, getting new departments meant that people were realising we were doing a good job. For me, it isn't about the money. It's about the personal achievement of people looking in and saying we're doing a good job. I believe we're all here to look after each other. Our main focus is the patients, they are the defenceless people in this whole equation. I get a lot of satisfaction from knowing I've achieved something.

With such a large team, staffing can be a challenge, but I try to see a challenge as a positive. I also enjoy being able to help staff move through the ranks. You might see a staff member who has potential, and you want to help them by opening up doors for them. I always say I'd rather have a good employee for a year or two, and they move up, than have a bad employee for 50 years.

When I first started here, I thought I would work as a cleaner for a while, and then maybe get an office job. I've just been very lucky in my career. I always have high expectations of what I want to do, and I try to plug into other people who can help me achieve what I want to achieve.

Alex Irwin

Senior Manager, Financial Audit Services,
Tasmanian Audit Office

I started out at the Tasmanian Audit Office through a 12-week internship during my university holidays in 2006-07.

I came back to the Audit Office as a Performance Audit Graduate in 2009 and, in 2013, moved to Canberra to work for the Australian National Audit Office. When I returned to Hobart in 2016, I worked for the Department of Treasury and Finance for just for over a year. I am now back working for the Tasmanian Audit Office in Financial Audit Services.

Both financial and performance audit require you to use what you've learnt at university and actually apply it in a real-world setting. I find the work really interesting and engaging.

There is no typical day in audit. In performance audit for example, you are reviewing whether the public service is protecting its resources or using them efficiently and effectively. Topics that the Audit Office has covered include health services, social housing and child protection. It's a really interesting role.

While you generally need a degree related to accounting or finance for financial audit, there is no specific degree required to become a performance auditor. I've met auditors who were musicians, scientists, ambulance officers and even a person who used to jump out of a rescue

helicopter to save people at their time of need. Critical thinking is the most essential skill for an auditor. You need to look at a situation and be able to create and methodically apply tests to the operating environment.

Audit work is also about communication and working in a team. It is fieldwork based, so we're generally out at a client's premises – in an office, in a hospital or at a school – talking to people. It's very much about engaging with other public servants and the community.

For a career in the public service, I would advise people to be open to new opportunities, find work that you find interesting and pursue that. If you are interested in auditing, hone your creative problem solving and critical-thinking skills and learn how to talk to people.

I love solving problems, that's what keeps me going. Every day a new problem crops up and you've got to work through the process of solving it and implementing or providing advice on the best solution.

I also like the fact that you make a difference in the lives of the people you associate with on a daily basis. You may improve their ability to access health care when they are most at need or quality education services.



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Sandra Onn

Station Officer,
Tasmania Fire Service

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When we go to a job or an emergency, we're there to make it better, and we don't leave until we do. That's fantastic.
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I'm a Station Officer in the Tasmania Fire Service. I have been in my current role for approximately eight weeks. My current job in the Building Safety Unit involves working with people from all different sectors of the community – organisations, schools, accommodation providers – making sure that their fire protection systems are adequate and operating in accordance with legislation.

As Tasmania's first female station officer, I am proud of my achievements. I first joined the Fire Service in 2005, through our communications area. I worked as a dispatcher in FireComm for nearly four years, and then became a firefighter in 2009. It's a really long process to go from being a trainee firefighter to where I am now, and everyone goes through the same process, regardless of gender.

It took me a while to get in to the Fire Service. The process is quite stringent. You do need to be physically fit and strong. We go into high stress situations – confined spaces, hot and dangerous environments. You have to be physically and mentally able cope with that. It's hard work, and I put a lot of pressure on myself to do the job to the best of my ability.

Women are really underrepresented in the Fire Service. I think many women just don't recognise that this is a career option for them. If they've got an inkling to work in emergency services, many women go to police or ambulance. They don't think that the Fire Service is something they can do. But they can. I and all the other women in the service are proof that you can do it. You may not get in on the first go, but it's about building your ability and not giving up.

I do think it's important that we reflect the community we are serving – whether we're talking gender, religion, race etc – because having diversity brings different perspectives. It brings a different dimension to how we do the job, how we relate to the community. The people we serve are not necessarily going to remember the equipment that we used, or how we did the job. They are going to remember how we made them feel.

I want women to know that working for the Fire Service is a great career. If you want to be hands-on in the community, there is nothing better. When we go to a job or an emergency, we're there to make it better, and we don't leave until we do. That's fantastic.

Delia Summers

Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer (BSW),
Launceston General Hospital

I have been working in Aboriginal organisations for many years, but I've been in my current role for 11 years now.

I am an Aboriginal woman. My heritage is from Cape Barren Island, and I am a direct descendant of Mannalargenna, an elder of the Plangermaireener nation. Like many Aboriginal children of that era, I was removed from my community by the state welfare. It was something that was supposed to benefit us, but it didn't. There was a lot of racism, and those early years were difficult and challenging.

In my late teens, I put myself through college, and later through university, eventually with a degree in social work. I started working at Launceston General Hospital in 2006. Growing up in the community, and what I went through growing up, this was the perfect opportunity for me to be a voice for the Aboriginal community.

It's so important for people in our community to know that they have somebody here they can contact, someone they can come in and have a yarn with. We have patients who come from Cape Barren Island and Flinders Island, who have been off the island for years and can be very frightened. For them to know they have someone here, who can visit them and support them, is very rewarding.

If I were to give any career advice, I would say seek out a support person or a good supervisor you can debrief with. I have a very good Aboriginal supervisor – I feel it has to be culturally appropriate. Seek support when needed. I am sure there are people throughout the state you can call upon and ask for assistance, in terms of managing your programs or improving your programs. When I first started work, I assumed I was the one who had to do everything. I believe it is important to stand up for what you believe in. If you want changes, push for change in a positive way.

The best part of my job is supporting my clients, coming in here and knowing that I'm not just going to come into the office and sit down at my computer. I never know what kind of day I'm going to have, and that's what makes work exciting for me. It could be anything. It's the unknown, but also knowing that you're going to be there for the community no matter what it is.

To any Aboriginal woman considering a career path like mine, I would say: go for it, believe in yourself, stay true to yourself, don't doubt yourself, always remember where you come from and be proud of that. To the young girls out there, I say: you can do whatever you put your mind to. You can do it, no matter what age you are, there is heaps of support available for you. Don't give up on your dreams.



“ I believe it is important to stand up for what you believe in. If you want changes, push for change in a positive way. ”



Donna Stanley

Project Manager, East Coast Projects,
Parks and Wildlife Service

I've been with Parks and Wildlife for about 23 years. In my current role, I'm focused on two projects. I'm managing the Freycinet Peninsula Master Plan and the Maria Island Rediscovered project. They are both projects that are being supported through state government, parks, tourism sector and key stakeholders groups including community. This is a two-year fixed-term project. My substantive role is a parks and reserves manager for the northeast coast.

There are so many different aspects to parks and wildlife – it's so diverse. Every part of our state is special and unique, and governed by different values, management plans, stakeholder interests. Wherever you go in parks, if it's regionally based, you can have a completely different work experience. Conservation is just one component of what we do. There are also so many opportunities for community engagement. You're continually learning, there's always something new. There are so many challenges, but for me a challenge is an opportunity. How can we move through that? And what can we achieve?

Every day in my job is different. On any given day, you might be dealing with a staffing issue, and at the same time you might be dealing with a sewage issue—with infrastructure failing or needing to be replaced. You're always trying to address

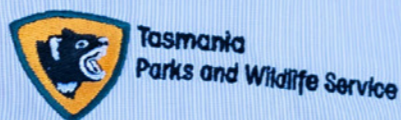
the needs of the community or the business sector, balancing the competing interests of many stakeholders, who may or may not have the same values as parks. So it's always a challenge, always an opportunity, and there are lots of complexities.

You need resilience and integrity in this job, especially when you're dealing with community and stakeholders. You have to make sure you're in line with the organisation's policies and strategic directives. Being able to work with difficult or challenging stakeholders without taking things personally is probably one of the biggest challenges in this job.

I would say, don't take anything personally. You do need to have good organisational skills to do this job, and an ability to prioritise. I don't get that right all the time. But you need the ability to learn from that, as well—to own up to the things you didn't get right, learn from it, and move on.

The best part of my job is the places we get to work. You get to go to the beach, and it's a work day! That's awesome. It's also really about the people we work with, within the organisation and the variation of stakeholders we get to work with outside the organisation. It's also about the positive difference we can make, not just in terms of conservation, but in the community.

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You're continually learning, there's always something new. There are so many challenges, but for me a challenge is an opportunity.
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Robyn Trdin

Senior IT Support Officer,
Department of Education

I started my career many years ago in the State Service as a data processing officer and I now work in ICT. At that time, ICT was fairly immature and there weren't a lot of formal training courses widely available. It was really great to start off on the ground floor and learn about IT in a fairly unstructured but demand-driven way.

Early in my career, I had a supervisor who took me under his wing. One day, he opened up the communications cupboard on the floor, and I can remember standing there looking at it with him. He was talking me through a solution to a problem. I was looking at all the network equipment and cabling and I thought, 'This is what I want to do. This is great!' It was a kind of lightning bolt moment for me. From there, I went on and completed various Industry Certifications and courses and have been learning ever since.

As a child I used to play around with old radios and try and figure out what made them work and how to repair them. I've always had an interest in technology and a fairly inquiring mind. I had that desire to find out more about Information Technology, specifically computer networks—to demystify them in a way. That's the sort of stuff that I enjoy doing—it's really rewarding.

A day in my job is certainly challenging and rewarding. In the background of every day, you have standard helpdesk jobs. Overlaid with larger projects you work on or lead, most recently refreshing the communications infrastructure in our Data Centres. So you could be involved in a number of projects, plus background tasks and you're also helping other staff who might walk up and seek assistance with something. It's a really diverse and interesting combination of things.

One of the biggest challenges is juggling all those different priorities in what can sometimes be a stressful and time-pressured environment. But conversely that's also the best part of my job – it's never boring. It can be challenging and you spend time out of your comfort zone. There's lots of curve balls. It's really interesting and it's great to be able to have the opportunity to take the lead on various things.

Often we have jobs advertised and I find it disappointing to discover that no women have applied. I often wonder how we change that. I did my training on the job and have been supported by my workplace. To any women thinking of pursuing a career in ICT I would say give it a go and challenge yourself, don't underestimate what you can bring to the workplace.

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Ginna Webster

Secretary,
Department of Communities Tasmania

I started working in the public service when I was 19-years-old, as a drug dog handler with Customs, and I eventually became the Inspector of the New South Wales Dog Unit. In Tasmania, I have held a number of public sector roles in the Department of Justice, working with the Prison Service and Community Corrections. Eventually I became a Deputy Secretary in the Department of Justice, and three years later, the Deputy Secretary, Children in the Department of Health and Human Services. When this position came up, I thought, 'If not now, when?' In May this year I was appointed Secretary Designate of the new Department of Communities Tasmania.

I'm really passionate about trying to resolve issues at grassroots level, rather than being the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. I have seen so many kids coming through the juvenile justice system, the child protection system, and then end up in prison. This whole new department will be about making that difference, intervening in people's lives to help them get what they deserve out of life. Giving young people and families opportunities that they wouldn't have otherwise had. I love working with people. I particularly love working with people who haven't quite realised their potential – to see someone shine when perhaps no one has given them that encouragement before, or to turn a situation around. That's great.

As a leader in the State Service, I think you have to accept that you're going to draw some criticism. For women, that can sometimes be a bit harder

to soak up. One of my skills is that I can let it go. I don't take things personally and I don't hold grudges.

I think you also have to learn that it's OK to be emotional about things, and be passionate, but you can't wear your heart on your sleeve. You still have to make a logical argument. You need to be able to identify that you want to have a narrative and tell a passionate story, but coupled with that, you also need the backup of strong evidence.

Another piece of advice I give to future leaders is that you don't have to say yes to everything. When you're building up your career, you want to be successful, so you have a level of ambition. But it's important to be discerning about the role you're being offered, knowing what opportunities are good to do, and which are not. As a woman, sometimes you say, 'Oh someone noticed me, someone thinks I can do something really well. I have to say yes'. Actually, being able to say, 'No, that's not for me', is really important.

The thing that frustrates me the most about working in the public sector is that people outside the public sector are often very critical. They don't see the hard work that people in the public sector do. I find that very frustrating. No one else would want to do this job. Being a child safety officer, being a housing officer – there are people who do these jobs because they love it, and then they get a bad rap for what they do. There are very few good news stories about the public service. I am really passionate about getting people to understand what the public sector is really good at.

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I love working with people. I particularly love working with people who haven't quite realised their potential – to see someone shine when perhaps no one has given them that encouragement before.
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Anita Yan

**Information and Program Manager
for the Land Tasmania Division,
DPIPWE**

As Information and Program Manager for the Land Tasmania Division, I am part of the senior management team and provide oversight of systems or information flows across the department. I also work with the department's information technology (IT) area to deliver any innovation programs. I've been working in the department for 15 or 16 years now, and I've been in my current role for just under 12 months.

The best part about my job is that it's always interesting. In IT, things move so fast that you really have to work on keeping up with the latest trends, and what that means for service delivery. Because the diversity in the program of works, the most challenging part of my job is making sure I'm across where they are all at and what the challenges and issues are – just being prepared and making sure I know what my priorities are for each day.

I spent my first year in the department as a graduate business analyst. Then I got a new manager who said, 'Anita, you need more technical skills'. That really freaked me out because I'd always seen myself in a business-focused role rather than in the technical space, doing actual coding work. But he was really encouraging and

just said, 'You can do it!' That manager paired me up with a senior developer, and it was really that developer, that mentor, who taught me everything I needed to know.

That was probably the best thing anyone has ever done for my career. I think that the technical skill set gave me a really good foundation to build on and is the key to getting me where I am now.

When I was at university, IT was very much split into the business-focused stream and the computer science stream (often seen as the 'geeky' side of IT). I always saw myself going more into the business-focused side of things, but it wasn't until much later that I understood that having a more technical foundation really benefited my career. I think we do need to 'de-geekify' IT to encourage better participation in these more technical fields. For me, it's talking about what technology means for the world, and how that brings about change, benefits, and innovation.

I think I've been really fortunate. Right through my career, I've had really good role models, male and female. I didn't approach my career thinking there were any limitations on what I could achieve.



“Right through my career, I've had really good role models, male and female. I didn't approach my career thinking there were any limitations on what I could achieve.”

**Department of Premier and Cabinet
State Service Management Office**

Phone: 6232 7040

Email: ssmo@dpac.tas.gov.au

Web: <http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo>

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