



- 1 SA politician Robin Millhouse in his Parliament House office wearing shorts in 1966.
2 Margaret Keys and Carolyn Guyer take a closer look at some power-operated automatic office files in 1966.
3 Women's Information Service staff at work in their Adelaide office in the 1970s.
4 Tea lady Eve Wilson serves up some refreshments in 1967.
5 Joylyn Thomas, of Gawler, sorts through income tax returns at the Adelaide Taxation Office in 1972.
6 Job Hunters Club director Angela Biven, second from left, in a conference with youth services assistants Margaret Lamey, Judy Gurton and Phillip Marshall in her Norwood office in 1976.

Take a stand and break the bias

LAST week we celebrated International Women's Day – a day to note women's achievements and increase visibility while calling out inequalities around the world.

There are some amazing women out there – in your family, your workplace and your neighbourhood. We should celebrate the women in our life every day.

This year's campaign theme "Breaking the bias" – asked us to focus on the significant bias which makes it difficult for women to move ahead. Simply acknowledging that this bias exists is not enough. Collectively, we need to call out discrimination and stereotyping and aim for gender equality.

In Australia, one in three women have experienced violence or sexual harassment since the age of 15.

On average, women spend more time in unpaid work than men and are more likely to live below the poverty line.

The risk of homelessness in older women in Australia is significantly increasing.

On average, women retire with approximately 20 to 40 per cent less superannuation than men.

Our federal parliament is comprised of fewer than a third of women – these are people making the decisions for our country.

While there has been significant progress with equality, a lot more needs to be done. On average, women



MEL OTTAWAY

continue to be paid less than their male counterparts and continue to have significantly lower representation on boards. In 2020, women across the country worked nearly two months more to earn the same, on average, as men.

Is this the world you want for your wife, your daughter, your mother, your sister, or your friend?

Health care, social services and education continue to be dominated by women and tend to be lower paid than male-dominated industries.

These are the people caring for our loved ones. Should we be OK with this?

Imagine a gender-equal world – a world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated.

Together we can forge women's equality; collectively we can all take action to "break the bias".

We are all responsible for making this change together.

Mel Ottaway is Uniting Communities' executive manager, services for older people

tea ladies and long lunches

women's liberation movement began to force modifications in the mid to late 1970s.

In more recent times the modern office is flexible on what is suitable for employees to wear.

Most will accept a casual dress code, some even allowing jeans and T-shirts.

However, in offices of yesteryear it was far from that.

Strict guidelines were laid down for usually a smart business suit with a tie for men, while women were expected to wear stylish dresses or a skirt and blouse, usually paired with heels.

It wasn't until much later when women were finally allowed to wear pant suits.

Despite all its faults and shortcomings, I suspect that many baby boomers would prefer at least some parts of the office of yesterday over the more politically correct and stricter office conventions that exist now.

As Antony Mattera pointed out to me: "You knew exactly where you stood and knew what you could get away with and what you couldn't."

"Life was a lot more relaxed then and I think we had more fun, and everyone could take a

joke. I feel there was a lot more loyalty between firms and their employees too, and companies were prepared to really look after their staff.

"We had a big staff picnic every year and a Christmas party for the whole family with presents and ice cream and lollies for the kids."

Finally, Doreen Wallace summed up her more than 50 years in the workforce.

"I remember working in the late 1960s; there used to be commissionaires at the front of larger places (banks, stock exchange, stockbrokers)," she recalls. "And lift attendants to

press the right buttons.

There was also an army of ladies dressed in smart brown uniforms whose job was to come into the office to clean and disinfect each telephone handset receiver and rotary dial.

"My goodness, times have changed so much – it's incredible."

Bob's latest book, Adelaide Remember When: The Boomer Stories, is now available at all good book shops. He posts memories of Adelaide every day on Facebook.com/adelaiderememberwhen/



On average, women retire with approximately 20 to 40 per cent less superannuation than men. Picture: iStock

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