

**Keynote Address  
Women Building Australia Lunch  
Master Builders Association Western Australia**

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Welcome and thank you for attending today's Women Building Australia Luncheon

I am honoured to be appointed as a Women Building Australia Ambassador.

The building and construction industry is a wonderful and exciting industry to be a part of.

In the over 35 years that I have been involved in this industry, I have seen a steady growth in the number of women embracing the opportunities that it provides.

The industry offers great diversity, flexibility, a huge range of career opportunities and a vast assortment of career pathways.

It also has challenges, challenges that can equip you with strength, growth and skillsets that will achieve.

Many of you in this room have chosen to be in the industry because you are highly accomplished and passionate about what you do.

Others may be starting out or still be on the journey to finding their vocation, still searching for their passion whilst obtaining skills along the way.

Women Building Australia is about attracting the best workers regardless of their gender by promoting the opportunities for women and ensuring that they have the information and resources to support them in forging their start in our industry and for employers to attract, recruit, support and retain them.

Women Building Australia engages with female tradespeople who understand the realities of working in the industry and are succeeding. I am so proud; they are so accomplished and have great passion for building and construction. You can read about these influencers, on the Women Building Australia website.

We have also developed a female led business register to promote businesses within the industry that are led by females who can assist the public and particularly vulnerable women who would prefer using female builders and tradies.

It is so important that women have access to the same support that men receive. I am talking about access to support, encouragement and advice from experienced and successful individuals be it through support seminars or a mentoring relationship.

This is what Women Building Australia is providing.

I have been mentoring women and men for over 20 years and I am so proud to see so many of you in the room today.

You have followed your dreams and overcome adversity and, when challenges arose you rose above them with professionalism and integrity.

Women Building Australia launched a mentoring program 4 years ago. Women and men have stepped up to provide the mentoring support that has made this program so successful.

I encourage you, register your interest as a mentee or mentor.

The program aligns you with support information and interactive videos. The information and tools are comprehensive and extremely supportive. There are check in meetings and hook-ups along the way to share your experience and gain more experience from other mentees and/or mentors.

Once you register on the Women Building Australia website, you will be appropriately matched. If you are registering as a mentee, you will be matched with someone that aligns with the support you are looking for. If you are a Mentor your skill set will be matched with someone you can support.

It is a wonderful, positive experience for both the Mentee and Mentor.

I would encourage you all, both men and women to embrace the opportunity to share your knowledge or take advantage of the knowledge and skills of others.

I strive to share as much of my experience and knowledge to pave the way for women starting out in our industry so that one day, I can leave a legacy.

## **My Journey**

Many people have asked me about my journey and how did I achieve all the things that I set out to do.

I have been reluctant to do so in the past, but mentoring has shown me the power of personal stories in supporting others to succeed and so today I will be sharing some of my journey with you.

I was born in the late 60s when, believe it or not, houses sold for \$12,000 and you could buy a block of land for \$3,000.

From the age of 6, I loved the Brady Bunch and I wanted to be like Mike Brady.

I wanted to draw houses and be a part of my children's lives. I knew what I wanted...at a very young age.

I spent most of my primary school days drawing houses and I would frame my Masterpieces and present them to my lucky relatives as gifts.

I built houses out of Lego.

I used the neighbour's bricks and built cubby houses for all my dolls.

I built tree houses.

And my most precious memory, was building a cubby house that was bigger than our shed with my Grandad.

I would design them and then we would build them. They were Masterpieces in my eyes. I was just 10 years old.

Then in what used to be called high-school, I landed a work experience opportunity with AV Jennings.

I was in heaven.

I got to be "Mike Brady" standing at a drawing board drawing real houses.

I knew that day that I had "found my calling."

Imagine my excitement at 14 years old when I was asked by the company to stay an extra week as they liked my design abilities and wanted to incorporate some of them into their base models.

I always liked a challenge.

I have never shied away from male dominated fields. I always enjoyed the challenge of being able to achieve what the boys were able to do.

It gave me courage, confidence, strength, and resilience.

When I found out that the Air cadets were allowing girls to join, I was the first in line.

It was at the Air cadetships, that I met my childhood sweetheart. I was 14 years old.

We were both going to follow and achieve our dreams...together. We married 3 years later and have been ever since.

We became inseparable. He knew my dreams and he shared his dreams with me.

We moved all the way across the country to Sydney, as I supported his dream of joining the air force and he supported mine to complete my Diploma in Architecture.

Some years later we moved back home to Perth, bought a house, and started our family. My Brady bunch dream was now a reality.

I worked from home, on my drawing board, while raising 2 beautiful children.

It was very important to me to be part of our children's lives. I never missed a school carnival, classroom roster, tuck shop duties or any of their sporting events.

In the language of today I was present and happily balanced.

### **The Dream Changes**

Happiness means something different to everyone. To me it was my family and designing and building homes.

As our children started their journeys through high school, I needed to plan for the inevitable.

What was my dream going to look like when they left home? And that's when my career unfolded, and the real challenges started.

I saw opportunities everywhere. I gained as much experience and knowledge as possible, in as many departments and roles as possible.

At one stage I had three management titles all at once. I loved the variety, I was managing departments, I was on site, I undertook legal opportunities and even IT/system setups.

I would attend any event to gain as much knowledge as possible – even enjoying the golf days and being the only female in attendance. Any opportunity to win business and I was there and let me tell you the amount of business that happens on a golf course is remarkable.

My new dream evolved, and I was determined that one day I would be a General Manager of a Building Company. The year my last child graduated from high school was the year that this came true.

### **Follow Your Dream**

There are many people along our journeys to success that help us achieve our goals.

It is wonderful to see so many “Male champions of change” embrace women in the industry and recognise their ability’s.

Women supporting women is another powerful strength that is increasingly enriching our industry.

I am very passionate about our industry. I hope everyone finds their passions and their calling.

I am passionate about providing support to help this happen and this is why I am passionate about Women Building Australia.

Parents are our first Mentors. We guide our children to help them make the right decisions for them.

I have always believed that “the children are our future. Teach them well and let them lead the way.”

I told our children to “follow your dreams whatever they are and whatever they pay because you will never work a day in your life”

I asked our daughter in year 7 (primary school) what she wanted to be when she grew up. She said she didn’t know. So, I asked if she knew what she did not want to do. She rattled off a list of jobs as long as your arm. Then one day she said, “Mum I know what I want to be”.

I asked the same question to our son. He, like me, from the age of 6 years old knew exactly what he wanted to be.

In the end, both our children, so different, followed their dreams just like their parents.

So, in closing, follow your dreams, surround yourself with positive, passionate, and successful people regardless of their gender.

Be there to help others on their journey and together we can build an Industry that is full of opportunity, rewarding, fulfilling, balanced, diverse, and fun.

**Ends...**