I begin by acknowledging the Wathaurong people of the Kulin nations, the traditional custodians of the land on which we are gathered today. We pay our respects to them for their care of the land.

Thank you for this invitation and congratulations to Daryl and Geelong West Rotary for the idea to have a series on the Women Reshaping Geelong.

Women’s role in the world has changed tremendously over my lifetime. Compared to my youth in the 60s and 70s, there are more empowered women, more women who are highly educated and increasing numbers of entrepreneurial women. In just a generation women have become more economically powerful and increasingly influential in politics, business and education.

**But for us in Geelong the issue is not about who is running what but more about how we as a community address the serious challenges we face...**

I will focus my remarks on Deakin Geelong while acknowledging that Deakin has its Burwood campus in Burwood, a Warrnambool campus and a cloud campus.

Our history in Geelong is a proud one: The town was built on the enormous wealth of wool, enjoyed the years of the manufacturing era but now, as the wheel turns on the economy our community, like many others, is now experiencing a difficult transition to advanced manufacturing and the knowledge economy... we are watching the sun set on many businesses in Geelong and the wider surrounds, businesses and industries which have given workers certainty and which have secured Geelong’s future for almost 70 years.

The challenge of transitioning to the digital economy is highlighted almost daily – none of us can ignore it as people and businesses struggle to survive in an economic paradigm which turns on its head long accepted ways of doing business.

A decade ago, workers worried about jobs being outsourced overseas. Today, it’s entirely possible to assemble a team in the cloud to take on all of a company’s sales and customer support functions.

In a globally connected world, geographical boundaries have all but disappeared. The digital divide has been turned on its head, with most internet access via mobile and becoming truly universally available and affordable.

Many millions in Asia and Africa will never use a land based telephone having leap frogged a hugely expensive and now stranded almost ancient technology. Worldwide penetration of mobile phones has now passed 50% and over 3 billion people now use the internet.

The adoption of smart phones and tablets is almost universal. Their allure is irresistible, their use is utterly convenient and they are seriously addictive.
Global connectivity, smart machines, and new media has changed forever the way we interact, engage and communicate with each other ... our thumbs are stronger, our attention span infinitely shorter and we can always be mentally and digitally someplace other than where we are.

**Preparing people to compete in today’s complex and fast-changing global economy is one of our most urgent challenges ...**

Education has never been more important... for individuals it is an important predictor of future health, employment and welfare prospects. And for our region ... developing an educated, nimble workforce is critical to sustaining strong economic growth.

A US study reported that by 2020, around 70% of all jobs will require education beyond high school—up from roughly 25% just 40 years ago – this is American data but the pattern is just as true here.

As smart machines take over routine manufacturing and services jobs, there will be an increasing demand for the kinds of skills machines are not good at, the thinking skills that can’t be codified. Recent research suggested that 47% of jobs may be computerised within one or two decades.

Not everyone will need a four year degree, but in an era when knowledge is the key to the future, many many more will need to be educated to a higher standard.

And herein lies one of our region’s biggest challenges. School retention rates here in Geelong are much lower than those in metropolitan areas. Last year the Victorian Auditor General’s report found that only 39% of young people from regional areas say they intend to enrol in university compared to 63% of those in Australia’s major cities.

**Deakin is Geelong’s university, young and ambitious and** on a strong trajectory. It ranked 45 on the world in the Times Higher Education ranking of universities under 50 years and it ranks in the top 3% of the world’s universities in each of the three major global rankings.

Working with the Gordon Institute and our local schools our most important task is to prepare graduates for the jobs and skills of the future. We need to make education acceptable to young people and to their parents – to understand and address the barriers to aspiration.

We need to make university education sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of workers returning to school to update skills ... older students juggling work and family responsibilities as well as young school leavers.

Did you know that skills now have a predicted half-life of 2.5 to 5 years? The career of a lifetime no longer lasts a lifetime and workers will need to upskill multiple times.

We need to make education accessible and affordable –addressing the barriers of financial disadvantage and meeting the needs of students from a diverse range of backgrounds.

In the global war for ‘smart talent’ ... educated, skilled and experienced workers will increasingly be in demand ... tech savvy workers with a global mindset and the capacity to manage change.

**Deakin has always been committed to research that makes a difference to the communities we serve ...**
Through its Geelong Technology Precinct, Deakin is leveraging its research and development capability to directly benefit the Geelong economy and regional Australia more broadly.

The Carbon Nexus facility at Deakin is now the world’s leading carbon fibre research facility. The $34m facility offers state of the art research and analysis laboratories, pilot scale and research carbonisation lines and a team of capable, energetic researchers dedicated to working with industry to produce high quality carbon fibre.

Deakin has created an effective platform for SMEs and large companies to fulfil their research needs. Carbon Revolution is an excellent example of the output of research and incubation at Deakin.

Manufuture Geelong is a new incubator facility that aims to specifically support the development of start-up and young innovative enterprises, linking private companies and investors with Deakin’s IP and research infrastructure. The facility, if and when we manage to get it fully funded, will provide 5,000 meters of flexible space to accommodate start up and innovation focussed small enterprise and large R&D driven corporations. The ManuFutures building is envisaged to hold up to 15 Small and Medium Enterprises.

Deakin’s new $55 million Centre for Advanced Design in Engineering Training (CADET) has begun to provide the most advanced engineering and design training capabilities in regional Australia and it will have more than $6 million worth of cutting edge technologies and offer programs from Year 8 through to PhD level.

Encouraging young people, most particularly young women, to take up a career in Engineering is the other challenge. The recent report from the Chief Scientist suggests that 75 per cent of the fastest growing occupations will require STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills and knowledge.

**Deakin’s Geelong campuses contribute directly to the region ...**

Well over 10,000 students study at Deakin’s campuses in Geelong and of these, about 5,000 live in the Geelong region during their studies.

Deakin University is also one of the region’s largest employers, creating over 3,000 equivalent full time jobs in the local community, including over 1,500 directly on the Waterfront and Waurn Ponds campuses.

Deakin’s Waterfront and Waurn Ponds campuses are worth $426 million annually to the Geelong region’s economy. Deakin operations contribute approximately $313 million to the Geelong economy and Deakin student expenditure adds a further $112 million.

As a leading innovator, employer and educator in the region, Deakin is playing its part in helping the Geelong region adjust to the economic changes ahead.

As a female leader in this community I am acutely aware of my responsibilities and how I conduct myself and the values I follow in how we deliver our services.

I also keep a close eye on the next generation. We need our young girls to choose maths at school, and we need as many of them as possible to learn to code and use a computer device at a deeper level than just going to Facebook.
I also look forward to the day when it is not unusual for a women to run a university or manage $1Bn dollars annually. The fact that it is a point of note in Geelong is to our credit. Thank you.