

Highlights of the Australian Investment Conference 2019

Trisha Mok, Non-Executive Director and WOBSX Participant

A warm welcome to [Women on Boards](#)

It was my first time at the [Australian Investment Conference](#) 2019 (**AI Conference 2019**) and I was unsure what to expect. How delightful to be so warmly welcomed by Chief Executive, [Yasser El-Ansary](#), [Australian Investment Council](#) and his team.



Photo: Trisha Mok

The Australian Investment Council graciously hosted myself and nine other [Women on Board Syndicate Program](#) (**WOBSX**) alumni and current participants, together with WOBSX Chair [Mark Richardson](#) and Program Director [Dan Liszka](#).



Photo: Trisha Mok

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Opening address: Adapting to a changing world: how the Future Fund is investing in private markets

[Wendy Norris](#), Deputy Chief Investment Officer, Private Markets for the Future Fund, which has almost 16 per cent (\$25bn) of its total investment in private equity, gave the [opening keynote](#).



Photo: Damien Ford, [Damien Ford Photography](#)

Ms Norris noted that:

“Over the past 20 years we have witnessed a strong and sustained shift in the market landscape, with growing private markets on one hand and shrinking public markets on the other.

Privately held investments have grown twice as fast as public markets in the last decade. Private markets now account for more than US\$6tn of market value – almost 10 per cent of global investment assets.

Consequently, when investors consider the investable equity markets, private equity is becoming an increasingly important consideration in their portfolio construction.”

Global economic outlook

This was followed a panel moderated by [Ali Moore](#), journalist and broadcaster with Westpac’s [Bill Evans](#) and NAB’s [Alan Oster](#) two living “economic” legends and I am told, a regular highlight of the AI Conference 2019 – this year they had a robust debate with themselves and Ali leaving us with plenty of food for thought regarding the global economic outlook.

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Keynote address – Private markets as a driver for change

[Urs Wietlisbach](#) of Partners Group presented a global view on the mega trends shaping the direction of the private capital industry following from his AFR interview: [“Why private equity beats 'arse-covering' boards”](#). His address continued in a similar fashion and did not disappoint.

Making new connections and rekindling old ones

The first day concluded with a social gathering for all conference delegates to network and meet industry peers in the Jim Stynes room. Not only did I make many new valuable connections, but the AI Conference 2019 cocktail party afforded an opportunity for an impromptu [CPE Capital](#) (formerly known as CHAMP Private Equity) reunion with CHAMP and CHAMP Ventures teams past and present, including myself – whilst not from the firm proper but from one of their portfolio firms [Scentia](#), an education company.

It was great to catch up with my former directors [Adrian Kerley](#), now Executive Director, Private Equity at [IFM Investors](#) and [Kristin Vaughan](#), now Director - Innovation Fund at [Clean Energy Finance Corporation](#). Kristin and [Ben Gust](#), Executive Director – Innovation Fund have [\\$100m to invest in start-ups](#) and technologies that reduce emissions while also boosting grid stability, so let's go shopping!

Last year CHAMP Private Equity were champions (pun intended) and took out the coveted award for Best Upper Mid-Cap Investment between A\$250 - A\$500 million for their investment in Accolade Wines, which was [sold to Carlyle Group for A\\$1bn](#), led by my learned colleagues [Jeremy Stevenson](#), Managing Director – Legal and Risk, CPE Capital and [Julie Ryan](#), formerly General Counsel and Company Secretary, Accolade Wines.



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Day 2: Highlights - Smart Technology: sparking a new era for energy consumption and investment

Energy security is one of the biggest issues confronting economies all over the world. The pricing of renewable and non-renewable energy sources closely follows any discussion about the capacity of markets to be competitive in a globalised market.

[Dan Adams](#), Co-Founder, [Amber Electric](#) and [Valentin Muenzel](#), Co-Founder and CEO, [Relectrify](#) shared with [Ali Moore](#), journalist and broadcaster their thought-provoking take on the role of innovative businesses in the energy sector here in Australia.

Prior to Amber, Dan worked for Tesla where he developed the South Australian Virtual Power Plant (VPP) and BCG, where he advised electricity retailers and networks on renewable energy and smart grid topics. The Tesla big battery in SA is being optimised every day and is creating significant value in the market, bringing electricity frequency services to the market. Snowy Hydro scheme is also part of the solution, together with the interconnectors.

Dan also announced that [Amber Electric has raised \\$2.5M](#) in an investment round led by [Square Peg Capital](#) and other supporters including [Impact Investment Group](#), [Black Sheep Capital](#), [Eytan Lenko](#), [Simon Sheikh](#), and [Geraldine Chin Moody](#) and [James Chin Moody](#).



Photo: Damien Ford, [Damien Ford Photography](#)

For women interested in the energy space and growth companies, Valentin commends [EnergyLab's Women in Clean Energy Fellowship](#) to you.

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Champions of Change

The Australian Investment Council is strengthening its commitment to greater diversity within the private capital industry through its [Champions of Change Program](#) which commenced in mid-2019. The push for greater diversity across the sector also influenced the approach taken by the Australian Investment Council's AI Conference 2019, including the invitation to Women on Boards representatives and ensuring diversity of speakers on the program.

The Champions of Change Program is led by a group of 12 senior leaders from private capital investment firms, as well as key institutional investors such as superannuation and sovereign wealth funds.

I was fortunate to get to know one of the Champions, [Anne-Marie Birkill](#), Managing Partner, One Ventures during the AI Conference. We discussed her thoughts on increasing diversity in private capital firms and women on private equity boards, together with her tips for women seeking roles on such boards.

Thank you to [Grant Chamberlain](#), Principal, One Ventures – an alumni of both my Marlborough Primary School and University of Melbourne Law School - for the introduction, it's a small world!



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My “fangirl” moment

One of the highlights of the conference for me was getting to know the conference MC and leading journalist Ali More – here’s my “fangirl” moment.



Photo: Dan Lyszka, Program Director, WOBSX

In conclusion

I commend the Australia Investment Conference to Women on Boards members and anyone interested in the private capital industry.

Thought provoking presentations and access to the leaders of the private capital industry – it’s up to you to make the most of the networking and connecting opportunities.

Thank you again to [Yasser El-Ansary, Australian Investment Council](#) and his team for hosting us and WOBSX Chair, Mark Richardson, Chair and Program Director, Dan Lyszka for making this possible.