

Acceptance Speech for AES Fellowship

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, rau Rangatira mā, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

I want to acknowledge the many people gathered here today, the many nations, the many languages, all brought together because of your interest in, and passion for, the profession of evaluation. I also want to acknowledge that the conference is being convened on the traditional country of the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains. While I cannot be there, I pay my respects to those Elders past and present who maintain the custodianship of these lands.

I am extremely honoured to have been nominated for a Fellowship to the Australian Evaluation Society, to become part of a group of people who have not only made a significant contribution to the field of evaluation but who, in my mind, continue to demonstrate the principles, ideals and practice of what it means to undertake excellent evaluation. To join their ranks is truly humbling.

I have been incredibly privileged to work with an amazing and diverse group of people as a member of this Society. And of course, this Fellowship would not have occurred at all, were it not for those who have mentored and guided me in my journey. And so it is only right that I acknowledge them today as I owe them all a huge debt of gratitude. People like June Lennie who convinced me to work on the Conference Support Grants Committee and then as a member of the Indigenous Strategy Committee, and Judy Pearce and Mathea Roorda who enticed me to join the Indigenous Awards Committee.

I have been fortunate to work with, and learn from, David Roberts who was the President of the Board when I reluctantly got “voluntold” to help out at a Board level. And then President Lyn Alderman and Vice President Liz Smith who provided the leadership which allowed our Board to make some significant changes throughout the 2017/2018 period - not the least being the development of the first Reconciliation Action Plan and leading the consultation process which allowed us to become the **Australian** Evaluation Society. I believe it was Liz and Lyn who conspired to put forward mine and Sharon’s nomination. Thank you both for one of the biggest surprises of my life, I literally fell out of bed (because I got the email at 6 in the morning!) when I received the news. Thank you for honouring Sharon and I in this way.

And throughout all of this time and all of this work, the single unwavering constant has been Bill. Thank you, Bill for everything you and your team do to assist us and ensure the success of the Society.

One of the things about Indigenous people, if you haven't already noticed, is we don't tend to do things alone. So, in all the roles I had, I either roped in my mates to help me out (ay Gill?) or better yet for the Society, brought new people in – people such as Eliza Pross, Alitasi Sua-Tavila, Lenore Dembski, Doyen Radcliffe, Kiri Parata and a woman who has become a very dear friend and mentor, Sharon Clarke. Sharon, I am so fortunate to have worked with you, you will never know how much I learned from you, nor how much I valued our time together on the Board. I am so proud to accept this Fellowship because I know that you too are receiving this honour.

Finally, the woman who kicked it all off for me back in 1995, my long-time friend and evaluation mentor. I would not be involved in evaluation at all were it not for Professor Jenny Neal who took a nosy and geeky kid and shaped that nosiness and slight OCDness into a career that has been useful for my people. A truly inspiring and passionate evaluator, teacher and friend. E te mareikura, nēi ra te mihi aroha ki a koe.

I am not sure what the rules are around speech length at these things so I can't name everyone who has made an impact on my work (and my apologies if this is too long) but to all those I have worked with, and learned from, as a consequence of being a member of this Society, thank you. Thank you for your camaraderie, your patience, for the laughs, and the tears, but most of all thank you for your unwavering support for ensuring the Society recognises Indigenous worldviews, Indigenous practices, and the importance of Indigenous evaluation, led by Indigenous peoples.

Once again, thank you for this honour, I look forward to the next stage of this journey as a Fellow of the Australian Evaluation Society.

Kuā oti taku paku kōrero, nō reira, e hoa mā, koutou katoa, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.