Girls hear a message of power and inspiration: 

School, university, jobs. These were the top of the agenda when The Australian held a special panel discussion for women at Pymble Ladies' College in Sydney. The paper's associate editor Caroline Overington moderated the event, which included questions from the floor to the panel of Caroline Gurney, managing director, marketing and communications, Lorna Frommert, UBS, Dr Jessamy Tiffen, a research scientist from the Centenary Institute of Cancer Medicine and Cell Biology; and PLC principal Dr Kate Hadwen. This is an edited transcript of the event.

Tell us about your work? What does your day look like? 
Dr Gurney: As a CEO, I am involved in all aspects of the College, from small-group discussions to large-scale strategic planning. I try to figure out exactly how a woman fits into the genetic line. So, we’re trying to come up with new drugs and new treatments to treat and cure breast cancer.

Do you wear a lab coat? 
Dr Gurney: Yes, I wear a lab coat, I wear safety glasses. We’ve got the gloves, we’ve got the goggles, we’ve got the eyewear. It changes all the time, I’m responsible for ensuring that our research and that of our collaborators is of the highest quality. Our work is always evolving, and I’m constantly reminding people to think and to work as a team.

What skills do women need to succeed in science? 
Dr Gurney: We all need to learn to deal with failure. We’re actually in it for the long haul, we’re learning all these fantastic leadership and collaboration skills and how to interact with a group of people. We’re actually not understanding what the strategy of the business is and how the little bits fit into that big picture. If you ask a guy what he thinks of his position, he’ll say “my leadership skills.” But you need a better understanding of the business aspect. What does our company expect us to do? What forms work in the business? We’re doingresearch.

What about advice for women starting out in your field? 
Women don’t talk about the biggest barriers as much as they should because even though they know it, they just don’t think it’s the right thing to talk about.

What advice would you give to young women about managing expectations? 
Dr Gurney: I don’t believe in managing expectations. I believe in setting the bar high and achieving it.

What advice would you give to young women about managing expectations? 
Dr Gurney: I don’t believe in managing expectations. I believe in setting the bar high and achieving it.

What advice would you give to young women about managing expectations? 
Dr Gurney: I don’t believe in managing expectations. I believe in setting the bar high and achieving it.

What advice would you give to young women about managing expectations? 
Dr Gurney: I don’t believe in managing expectations. I believe in setting the bar high and achieving it.

What advice would you give to young women about managing expectations? 
Dr Gurney: I don’t believe in managing expectations. I believe in setting the bar high and achieving it.

What advice would you give to young women about managing expectations? 
Dr Gurney: I don’t believe in managing expectations. I believe in setting the bar high and achieving it.

What advice would you give to young women about managing expectations? 
Dr Gurney: I don’t believe in managing expectations. I believe in setting the bar high and achieving it.

What advice would you give to young women about managing expectations? 
Dr Gurney: I don’t believe in managing expectations. I believe in setting the bar high and achieving it.

What advice would you give to young women about managing expectations? 
Dr Gurney: I don’t believe in managing expectations. I believe in setting the bar high and achieving it.

What advice would you give to young women about managing expectations? 
Dr Gurney: I don’t believe in managing expectations. I believe in setting the bar high and achieving it.
resilience from women leaders

A research-intensive regional university delivering innovative solutions to real-world problems.

Dr Nilofar Vagheli (Senior Research Fellow, Summer Crop Allotment)

Dr Alston McCarthy (Research Fellow, Irrigation and Cropping Systems)

Dr Yuwei Ma (Research Fellow, Geopolymer Concrete)