

# Franklin Women

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## April 2017 Newsletter

Asking someone to mentor you is scary. I have done it a couple of times – once in person and once via email (it took me a good hour to draft the email!). Both were very ‘busy’ and ‘important’ people who said yes. They have, and still do, make a big difference to my life. However, they are not the only professional relationships I have sought out to assist my career. I have also seen a career coach. Initially it was hard to justify *paying* to speak to someone about my career. I also felt that by doing that I was admitting something was wrong with my career/me. Now I see how it was such a worthy investment in myself, and that it was not about fixing something that was broken but rather growing something to its full potential (which I’m still working on!).

I wanted to use this newsletter to talk about the types of professional development relationships that exist and how we can access them. One of our members Meru and her mentor Sue share their perspectives on their mentoring relationship – it is great! – while Katherine helps us understand exactly what a career coach is and when you might engage one. (If all this relationship talk gets too much, check the end of the newsletter for Amy’s fave foodie blogs!).

Happy reading!

Melina and the FW Team

P.S. Don’t forget applications close on 19th May for the Franklin Women sponsored spots in our cross-organisational mentoring program facilitated by Serendis! Details on [our website](#).

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## What happened this month

- Nominations are open for the [Australian Technologies Competition](#) (and this year our own Melina Georgousakis is one of the [judges!](#))
  - An update on the [Structural Review of the NHMRC’s Grant Program](#) was released.
  - Australia’s [National Science Statement](#) 2017 is now available online.
  - Applications are open for the inaugural and exciting [Superstars of STEM Program](#).
  - A new Franklin Women [career blog](#) is up – Clare interviews visual science communicator Kate Patterson.
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## Career Profile

Meet [Kate Whittaker](#), *Policy Analyst at Cancer Council Australia*. Her work focuses on ensuring people affected by cancer have access to appropriate care. She has a passion for continuous education, collaboration and hilarious puns.



***What is your training in the health or medical science field?***

My formal training is in health science and population health. However, through the roles I've held, and my post grad study, I've been able to develop content expertise in health systems and cancer care. I decided to do my post grad training while I continued to work full-time. I LOVED studying alongside work and, for me, it was a really valuable (and exhausting!) experience to be able to apply the skills and training in real time. I think particularly in the policy space, being engaged in the trends and the changing environment over time is important.

***How did you get to be the Policy Manager at Cancer Council Australia?***

I am in the wonderful position of policy manager for cancer care at Cancer Council Australia, a non-government, not-for-profit organisation. I manage the development of national policy positions and recommendations on issues that impact on the outcomes or experience of care of someone who has been affected by cancer. My first 'big girl' role out of uni exposed me to the amazing research projects undertaken by incredible and dedicated people investing their lives into advancing the understanding and treatment of cancer. From then I wanted to make sure I was involved in ensuring these precious outcomes would reach the people they were intended to benefit.

***What is one of your favourite projects you are currently working on?*** The most exciting (and challenging!!) issue at the moment is equitable access to therapeutic products and medical services. It's a challenge that various cancer control stakeholders are tackling. A major focus for my work is ensuring these reforms reduce any out-of-pocket costs paid by the patient and ensure access to optimal care regardless of individual circumstances. Technology and the rapid advancement of our understanding of cancer and how it is effectively treated are playing a big role in this shift. It is also complicated by international markets, overseas regulators and price...so a complex challenge.

***What are some of the major 'outputs' from your work?*** I coordinate the development of many upon many [responses](#) to Senate inquiries and reports open for public consultation, either from the Commonwealth, government agencies or non-government organisations. I also provide general advice of the impact of proposed changes to legislation and the interface between federal and state/territory governments, and develop positions on cancer care topics, such as the potential medicinal use of cannabis in symptom management of cancer.

**How do you think your work contributes to the field and/or the overall health of the community?** I've always thought *why do something that isn't going to have direct relevance to the person it's targeting?* Implementing change on any scale is a true collaboration. It involves researchers, advocacy and professional organisations, the people who will be directly impacted, and decision makers. Being able to provide evidence and recommendations can contribute to ensuring people have the information and service options available to them to make decisions related to their care.

**Who do you collaborate with and how did those work relationships come about?** I am lucky to have worked with well-connected advisors over the years. I am supported daily by formally established expert advisory committees, and have good relationships with other cancer control organisations and professional societies. These networks are critical to identifying and informing the opportunities to improve the delivery of cancer care to their patients. Probably like other areas of health, the professional cancer community is small so someone always knows someone else.

**Do you have any side interests or passions that you are looking to develop?** Right now, increasing my knowledge of the issues that impact people affected by cancer is a real interest. As my remit is across all aspects of cancer care, I have to (and choose to!) keep my knowledge base wide, and as policy is relevant to my personal life too, continuously learning assists my understanding of relevant issues, and how the health system works. Hopefully then I can communicate this to users of the health system to cut through the complexity to access the services they need.

I also LOVE knitting! I'm not very good at it and I am continuously knitting a square but for me it's relaxing and gives my mind a break.

**What food have you eaten too much of in your life?** Chips – salty, delicious snacks (occasionally also known as breakfast, or dinner) which I just can't seem to get over!

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## Building a mentor–mentee relationship: Like any other relationship?

**We've spoken previously about the benefits of mentoring, but how can one actually go about establishing a fruitful mentoring relationship?** FW member [Meru Sheel](#) and her mentor [Sue van Leeuwen](#) share their experience, from both sides.

**From Meru's perspective:**

In April 2015, while I was working at the Telethon Kids Institute, as the Chair of the gender equity committee I was asked to attend a seminar/ discussion on the '[white paper on Susan vs Simon](#)'. One of the speakers was [Dr Sue van Leeuwen](#). Sue was then the CEO of [Leadership WA](#), a not-for-profit organisation that provides leadership training for top executives in WA. I'm not sure what struck a chord with me, but I went up to Sue and asked if she would have coffee with me. And I am so glad that she said yes!



After a few weeks (you can imagine Sue's diary!) I finally met her. I remember anxiously waiting at the reception, not sure what I was going to say. Just then, Sue walked in and gave me a huge HUG! At that moment I thought, *I've only met this successful, amazing woman once, and she just hugged me!* We sat down, ordered coffee and chatted about life, running and work! And then Sue asked, "What would you like from me?". I instantly blurted, "Will you be my mentor?". It wasn't something I had planned, as I thought she was too 'important' to be my mentor (although I secretly hoped for it), but I took a chance because it felt right. Sue was initially a bit unsure due to the time commitment; she was

about to finish up at Leadership WA and had some family commitments including a grandchild on the way but I said I was willing to work to her schedule. In many ways, that was a life-changing moment for me.

From then on, we met almost monthly. I would have an (informal) agenda and every time she left me with 'homework'. Sue guided and supported me through some very significant professional decisions over the next few months and helped me grow my professional network. One of the most amazing things that I learnt from Sue was how to address difficult situations, in a timely and positive manner. She taught me to believe in my 'intuition' and the power of 'I' and 'We' when dealing with people. I've worked with some amazing researchers from whom I've learnt good science, but having a leadership mentor has been personally rewarding and has honed my leadership skills. I have several other career mentors who I lean on for guidance; some are supervisors who have naturally evolved into mentors, and some who I have formally asked. While some find the process of formally seeking a mentor too artificial, I find it advantageous as there is a certain level of expectation and commitment between the mentor and mentee with an outcome in mind.

In January 2016, I moved to Sydney, and I was sad to be leaving behind friendships but also my relationship with Sue. Sue and I have survived the distance so to speak; we still have our regular catch-ups over the phone or Skype or Facebook messenger! For me, having a mentor outside of my field of work has been invaluable and seems critical to career progression. Sue is someone I can go to without being judged or worrying about the impact it may have on my career, while ensuring my professional growth. Over time the relationship has evolved from being purely professional to a professional-personal relationship.

### ***From Sue's perspective:***

I first met Meru after giving a presentation about gender diversity in April 2015. I remember her professionalism as she commented about the relevance of my talk to her. Meru requested a coffee catch-up where she asked if I would mentor her. I agreed to do so with the proviso that we discussed our needs and if I couldn't mentor her, that I would introduce her to others who may do so.



What struck me upon our coffee meeting was Meru's preparation and again her professionalism, traits that she has consistently demonstrated. Meru told me about her professional and personal journey and that she was seeking assistance with her leadership journey. I felt well equipped to mentor her in these areas so proceeded with the mentor/mentee discussion that I would like Meru to drive the agenda, set goals and commit to undertake 'homework' that we agree on.

Meru is an accomplished researcher so I was very cognisant that I could not add too much value to her career subject area. However, during the mentoring process when she needed some advice about potential career paths, I reached out to a very

senior medical colleague asking would he meet with Meru about this. He replied saying 'of course', but connected us with a world-class medical expert in the area about which Meru needed more advice. Meru remains in contact with this expert and it reminds me of the importance of mentors 'sponsoring' their mentees and connecting them to additional professional networks.

From early in my career I made a commitment to being a mentor and to be mentored myself. As a mentor, I currently have several mentees and, without a doubt, I learn also from all these relationships. I admire Meru's work so much and am always proud of her ongoing, spectacular achievements. I am equally proud that she continues to grow through our mentoring relationship.

The advice I would give to those wanting to seek a mentor is exactly what Meru has done and continues to do:

- Do your research about a prospective mentor and then make the 'ask' confidently and professionally.
  - Be open to some very challenging and confronting conversations. It is from these that you will grow.
  - Set stretch goals, and monitor your progress on these goals. Share successes with your mentor because we love celebrating your success.
  - Be prepared to be 'reflective'. Some of the advice discussed may not immediately make sense.
  - Be prepared to 'experiment' with new and productive professional and leadership behaviour in your journey to develop positive and enabling behaviour.
  - Be thankful of your mentor's time and respectful of other priorities. Do your homework and be prepared to grow.
  - Use multiple communication techniques including face-to-face, telephone, Skype and social media contact. All are valuable.
  - Enjoy the friendship you will develop with your mentor.
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# Do you need a career coach?

*We all seek a career that provides a sense of fulfilment, that's an extension of our values, and provides an opportunity to utilise our strengths. [Katherine Bruce](#), Career and Development Coach, discusses the value of career coaching to achieve that goal.*



Perhaps you're in the role you've always wanted but you're feeling overwhelmed? Or maybe you've gone down a certain path with study, work or both but despite your best efforts you're unhappy and unsure what your next step should be? Working with a career coach can help you see what's possible and how to create a career that has meaning and provides fulfilment.

## ***Career coach vs mentor – what's the difference?***

A career coach will hold you accountable, listening, supporting and giving practical advice to help you focus and achieve your goals, while a mentor is usually an experienced person from the same or a similar industry, sharing how they got to where they are today and offering advice that may help you in your career. This is often a long-term career relationship with someone who has 'done it all before'. A career coaching relationship is usually for a set period, to address a particular need.

## ***What is career coaching?***

Career coaching is a structured, solution-oriented approach, which involves working with the client to identify their career goals, personal strengths and values, and creating a roadmap to achieve their career objectives and increase well-being.

A career coach will also work with the client to identify any behavioural, emotional or psychological issues that might be limiting their ability to reach their goals, and challenge the client to reflect on how they are perceived in the workplace. This might be through increasing awareness of their behaviour and its impact on other people, developing effective communication skills, or learning how to work with different personalities.

Some of the benefits of career coaching include:

- A clearer sense of purpose in your personal and professional life
- A roadmap for your career path
- Increased well-being and happiness
- Positive and seamless life transitions such as retirement or becoming a parent
- The ability to thrive as a working parent
- Effective communication skills.

## ***How do you find a good career coach?***

The most important thing is to find someone with good credentials, who you enjoy working with. You should be comfortable talking openly and honestly with them and feel that they 'get' you. Here are some tips for finding a career coach:

- Word of mouth: In a crowded market this is often the best way to find a good coach.
- Read their website closely: Do you resonate with what their clients say about them and how they market themselves?
- Check their credentials: Look for tertiary qualifications in HR management or coaching. Are they a member of a professional association such as the International Coaching Federation, or the International Society of Coaching Psychology?
- Do they offer a free introduction? Most career coaches will offer an initial consultation free of charge as an opportunity for you to get a feel for how they work and (importantly) decide whether you'll enjoy working with them.

***Katherine*** works with people who want to create fulfilling, energising and successful careers. If you would like to explore how you might benefit from career coaching, ***contact Katherine*** to arrange a free initial phone consultation. She is also offering FW members special rates for career coaching packages! Hoorah.

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## We are loving right now...

**Cooking!!** This month we are sharing some of our favourite food blogs and cooking tips, because good food makes everything better...

- Some long time fave food blogs include [101 Cookbooks](#), [Vegan Richa](#) and [Oh Ladycakes](#), or give this list of [best blogs](#) a browse and pick a new one to try!
  - If apps are more your thing, this one from [Green Kitchen](#) is highly recommended!
  - Sticking with seasonal fruits and veggies works for the environment and your wallet; we love this easy guide to [what's in season](#) based on where you live.
  - A nice food-related distraction from cooking is [Wardrobe v Pantry](#).
  - Known as the bible of food lovers and professional chefs, [On food and cooking: The science and lore of the kitchen](#), is definitely worth a read!
  - Some useful, and at times hilarious, cooking tips from [Reddit](#) and [Bondi Harvest](#).
  - Need some inspiration for birthday cake baking? Check out this [YouTube](#), enjoy!
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We want to include your contributions in our newsletter. If you are doing something, or know about something, that you think other women in our field would be interested in, drop us a [line](#). We are all about sharing, promoting and collaborating between women in our field. Don't be shy, it might bring about a great opportunity! Want to receive our newsletters directly to your in-box? [Subscribe here](#).