Women's Participation in Politics:

Personal Effort and Collective Change



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「Ta’ k-ke ho!」
Jenny Bloomfield – Constant Code-switching

By **Kolas Yotaka**

In the head office building of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs in Canberra, there is a special exhibition titled "Portraits & Mirrors" that features photographs of the first Australian women to be posted as ambassadors to various countries around the world. One of the photos shows a familiar face, a face that looks a little younger than it does now. The caption reads:
"Jenny Polyxeni Bloomfield, Ambassador to Greece, 2011-2014."

Bright eyes that sparkle, an air of confidence, and dimples that never seem to fade from her cheeks, are Jenny's trademarks. Jenny's life is a testament to the way Australian society has embraced diversity. She immigrated to Australia with her family from Greece when she was young and, after becoming an Australian citizen, she entered the Australian public service as a career diplomat and went on to become Australia’s first female ambassador to Greece, her own country of birth. It was an outcome that Jenny's parents could hardly have predicted when they first arrived with her in Australia.

Jenny was posted to Taiwan in 2021, and I was working in the government at the time, so I had the opportunity to meet her on a number of occasions. Elegant, warm, welcoming, and eager to learn, she quickly became active and influential within the foreign diplomatic community in Taiwan. Curious about all things Taiwanese since she first took her post, she not only became fluent in Mandarin, she also studied Taiwanese and picked up some words in Hakka and even indigenous languages. She often charmed her audiences by opening her speeches in one of these languages; and upon her departure from Taiwan, she recorded a warm, 2-minute farewell video spoken entirely in Taiwanese. A Greek-Australian, she studied law, political

science and languages at the University of Melbourne, joined the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra as a career diplomat, and in 2011 she made history by becoming the first Greek-born, and the first woman, Australian Ambassador to Greece. In DFAT Jenny also met and married fellow Australian diplomat James Bloomfield, since deceased, and they have four young adult children.

When we met for this interview, it was Jenny's first time back in Taipei after leaving office almost one year earlier. She was here for the launch of a new book, published by the Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation, an event that would showcase the deep friendship and cooperation between Taiwan and Australia. The volume contains documents, speeches, press releases and joint statements produced during her term in Taiwan. She told me that she wrote her own speeches, even in Mandarin, with input from her Australian Office colleagues; and all of them seemed to begin with 'Ta'k-ke ho' (Taiwanese: 'Hello everyone') or 'Nga'ayho' (Amis: 'Hello').

She also used words in Hakka and other indigenous languages. All of this was of great interest to me.

Kolas Yotaka

Kolas is an author, and co-founder of Solutions for Energy Security (SENSEC).Her interests cover national security, energy security, emerging technologies, international relations and international press. She is a former legislator and Presidential Office spokesperson.Ms. Kolas holds a certificate from the Harvard Kennedy School Executive Program and a Masters degree in Sociology from TungHai University.

Just like me, Jenny loves languages. Her first language was Greek, and after immigrating to Australia she became fluent in English. French is her third language, and she is just as fluent in Spanish, and in Japanese. Not to mention Persian, Italian, Mandarin and Taiwanese, which she has learned through her various postings. Whenever I see Jenny, it's like we're two computers sitting across from each other. The casings are transparent, and we can see through them as we start switching between different codes. Within a very short time, we can pick up each other's channel and start communicating at the same frequency. By frequency I don't just mean the language, but also our views on subjects like foreign affairs, national security, energy, gender, ethnicity and culture.

It takes confidence and wisdom to be able to switch modes in life. At the end of her term in Taiwan, Representative Bloomfield declined to take further overseas assignments. Having served as a diplomat continuously for over 29 years, she chose to retire in order to spend more time with her children and her family. But she has continued to travel, working with thinktanks and speaking at conferences in Australia, Taiwan, Japan, and the European Union. After years of diplomatic service, of travels and rich professional and personal experiences, she has now switched to 'being herself'. Before she set off back to her home in Melbourne, we met in Taipei, where I had just returned from a study trip to the United States. When the creative team at Peoplefish Poetry & Life invited me to chat with Jenny, I remembered what it felt like to be a reporter, and I immediately agreed. Switching modes in life can be fun. It is for me, and for Jenny too.

“Contributing in a New Role.”

By **Kolas Yotaka**

In early August this year, Australia held its annual defense talks with the United States. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin hosted Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles, who travelled to Annapolis, Maryland from Australia. After the talks, it was announced that Australia would begin to jointly manufacture weapons with the U.S. from 2025, including the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS), part of the allies’ commitment to promoting Indo-Pacific security and peace. The two also reaffirmed the importance of maintaining the status quo of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Many Taiwanese know well the key political figures of the United States, but are less familiar with those of Australia, which is geographically much closer to us. In fact, the only woman present at the “2+2” Talks on that day was Minister Penny Wong, who is Malaysian-born, openly gay, and Australia’s third consecutive female Foreign Minister. In many ways, she symbolizes the diversity of Australian society, which has embraced people from all over the world regardless of gender or ethnicity. This is also how Australia welcomed a Greek immigrant girl who went on to become an Australian citizen, join the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and work as a career



diplomat for nearly 30 years, including as Australia’s Ambassador to her own country of birth, Greece, and as the Australian government's representative in Taiwan: Jenny Bloomfield.

“Australia and Taiwan face similar challenges. We are working to promote economic growth and prosperity, advance regional security and peace, address the global challenge of climate change, promote the dual goals of energy security and the transition to clean energy.”

None of these vital areas are the exclusive domain of men. As a career diplomat, Jenny was stationed in Taiwan from 2021 until 2023. During this period, Australia had a federal election. The Labor Party came into office in May 2022. The new government significantly lifted Australia’s climate change goals, legislating a target of 43% carbon emission cuts by 2030 and net zero by 2050; and substantially increased

investment to turn Australia into a renewable energy superpower. Between 2023 and 2024, the Australian government is investing AU$4 billion (NT$85.4 billion) in new energy development, of which AU$2 billion will be invested in clean energy, mainly hydrogen. In the 2024-2025 budget, a further A$1.7 billion (approximately NT$36.37 billion) was set aside for development of the hydrogen sector and promotion of green trade. Promoting renewable energy cooperation between Taiwan and Australia was a top priority for Representative Bloomfield during her term in Taiwan.

"Energy security is national security, and it is regional security. Australia is the largest provider of energy and resources to Taiwan, and to other key regional economies like Japan and Korea. Our energy and resources relationship is longstanding and mutually beneficial. Taiwan imports more than 97% of its energy; Australia is proud to be a trusted and reliable supplier of energy and resources to Taiwan. Our energy and resources trade lies at the heart of our economic partnership; and that partnership continues to evolve as both of us work to achieve our net zero goals. The whole world needs to work together on climate action, transition to a clean energy economy. The move to a net zero emissions future presents enormous new opportunities for Australia and Taiwan to deepen our cooperation.

A diplomat's instinct

Jenny is a real professional. She is a highly energetic, proactive, effective and skilled diplomat; but she is also friendly, warm, approachable and down to earth, always making sure her guests feel at home. As Australia's representative in Taipei from 2021 to 2023, she hosted many Taiwanese friends at her official residence, from Indigenous artists and human rights activists to business leaders, members of parliament and the President. Her term in Taiwan ended in July 2023 but she returned less than a year later, this time to launch a book on Australia-Taiwan relations. When we met for our interview, she couldn't wait to pull a copy out of her bag, hot off the press.

"I am proud to have collaborated with the Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation to produce this volume - a collection of speeches, joint statements, press releases and other documents on the Australia-Taiwan relationship during my term. I think it shows clearly the breadth and the depth of Australia-Taiwan cooperation across all areas of our shared interests - from trade and investment, to energy and resources, to the clean energy transition, to health and biotechnology cooperation including during the challenge of COVID-19, when Australia and Taiwan helped each other and shared expertise. We strengthened

Jenny Bloomfield

Ms. Bloomfield is a writer and consultant for think tanks in Australia, Taiwan, Japan, and the EU. She worked in the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as a career diplomat for nearly 30 years, including as the Australian Representative in Taiwan; Ambassador to Greece, with non-resident accreditation to Albania, Bulgaria and Romania; Head of the Political/Strategic Section of the Australian Embassy in Tokyo, Japan; and political officer at the Australian Embassy in Tehran, Iran. In DFAT Canberra, she has held a range of senior roles including Assistant Secretary, Middle East Branch, Assistant Secretary, Human Rights and Gender Equality Branch; and was the Head of the Office for Women in the Australian Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Ms. Bloomfield holds a Master of Arts (Foreign Affairs and Trade) from Monash University; and a Bachelor of Laws (Honours), Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Letters from the University of Melbourne. Ms Bloomfield speaks Mandarin, Japanese, Greek, French, Spanish, Italian and Farsi.

links in education, English language learning, youth exchanges and arts and cultural cooperation, and deepened our Indigenous connections. We promoted human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, important objectives in both Australia and in Taiwan."

During her three years in Taiwan, Jenny made a point of personally drafting her speeches, some with colleagues' input, but always reflecting her personal touch. She is fluent in English and Mandarin, as well as six other foreign languages (Greek, French, Spanish, Italian, Farsi and Japanese). Even though she studied it for only a year and a half before taking up this posting, her Mandarin is good enough to be able to read and write, and she also studied some Taiwanese. She told me that her intention was not to publish this book for herself but rather as a record of, and a point of reference for, Australia-Taiwan cooperation.

"I hope that it can become a valuable tool for young people, researchers, academics and others interested in the Australia-Taiwan relationship."

She is genuinely delighted to hold the volume, "Celebration of Australia-Taiwan Friendship", in her hands, with the stunning Sydney Opera House on the front cover and a glistening Taipei 101 at night on the back. She is excited to talk about her work in Taiwan – a place about which she knows so much. She arrived just as the world was being hit by the pandemic.

"It was during COVID, the upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic. But even with that great challenge, the past few years have been a very productive period in the Australia-Taiwan relationship. I really wanted this volume to capture that."

As a result of history, like many countries Australia has only unofficial relations with Taiwan; the focus is on deepening trade, economic and cultural ties. One of Jenny's key goals for her term was to increase two-way trade. The world-wide shock of the COVID-19 pandemic might have stopped that in its tracks, but Jenny didn't give up; in fact the harder it seemed, the more motivated she became. In the end she set an incredible record at the most unlikely of times, something of which she is very proud.

"You know, we more than doubled two-way trade. We more than doubled energy trade, with increases in volume as well as value. For the first time, our trade reached 42 billion Australian dollars, or 32 billion U.S. dollars. Taiwan became Australia's fifth largest export market for goods, and Australia is Taiwan's largest provider of energy."

Jenny is visiting Taiwan not only to launch her book, but also to accept an invitation to act as adviser in a Taiwanese non-governmental think-tank. Flipping through the book's over 200 pages of speeches, documents and statements, they cover everything from trade, renewable energy and carbon emissions to semiconductors, offshore wind farms, precision health and biotechnology investments. Even though she says politely that she is now a retired diplomat and no longer wants to speak like one, her 30 years of diplomatic training is evident when she discusses the relationship between Taiwan and Australia:

"During my term as representative, we

held three hydrogen dialogues, welcomed Taiwanese delegations to Australia to look at hydrogen and other renewable energy technologies and to be briefed on the latest developments. Australia and Japan have also been working on hydrogen energy, the Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain Pilot Project in my own state of Victoria. It is still in the experimental phase, but we have had one shipment of liquefied hydrogen from Australia to Japan on a specially built ship. And we hope that in the future it will be possible to export clean hydrogen, similar to the way that we now export liquefied natural gas. We hope that in the future we will have similar technologies.

We can't stop talking about energy policy and regional security. On the energy transition in particular, there is so much to talk about and the time we have is short. Some people may still think that women can't speak confidently or in-depth about technology, semiconductors, energy or security. This is, of course, completely false. On the contrary, these are precisely the issues that Jenny and I most want to discuss.

"You know, [the relationship between Australia and Taiwan is] geo-politically very important, geo-economically very important."



"I believe energy and resources will continue to be at the heart of the Australia-Taiwan economic relationship into the future."

From a diplomatic point of view, energy is no longer just a trade issue. It's a national security issue as well.

"With many low emissions technologies, the technology is still new. It needs to be scaled up, to be commercially viable. We have to work together with our partners. A lot of work is happening; a lot of innovation, new technologies. Australia also has an abundance of strategic critical minerals, that are the building blocks of a clean energy future. For example, we have the largest deposits of minerals like lithium, used in the production of electric vehicle batteries. This is an area where we can do much more with Taiwan. In my discussions with leading Taiwanese companies, they have expressed interest in better connecting with Australia in batteries, electric vehicles and other renewable energy technologies. Australia has an unmatched advantage in clean energy and all of the key ingredients needed to become a major player in the global energy transition."

"A strategic location, a democracy and leading economy, a resourceful people, an open and inclusive society. A critical partner that has such close connections with Australia."

She studied law and politics, but Jenny has an inquisitive and adventurous side. Challenge motivates her. She likes to explore the unknown, gain understanding, build partnerships and look for common ground.

Maybe the experience of migrating as a child, moving across oceans and boundaries, makes it difficult for her to stay in one place, live the same kind of life or have a fixed role.

"I studied law, I taught languages. But diplomacy was the career that I always wanted to pursue. I was privileged to be able to realize this passion and to have had these remarkable opportunities. A diplomatic career is incredibly diverse. In my almost 30 years in the Australian diplomatic service, no day has been the same."

As a diplomat, she has experienced some of the world's most dramatic events over the past 30 years, just as she had hoped.

"As the first Australian Ambassador of Greek heritage, working in Greece during the Eurozone debt crisis, a significant challenge for Greece, the European Union and for the global economy. Living in Argentina, where my husband was the deputy Ambassador, during that country's devastating economic crisis. The challenge of living and working as a woman in Iran, our first posting; and later in Japan during the global financial crisis. We achieved a great deal, including establishment of the G20 leaders framework, a leaders' level Trilateral Strategic Dialogue between Australia, Japan and the US, later the Quad, and a significant deepening in Australia-Japan security cooperation. Last but not least, working in Taiwan during the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19 and deepening our partnership during a period of significant geo-political and geo-economic change."

Speaking of the career choice she made 30 years ago, it's clear she has no regrets.

"I can't think of a more rewarding job. Incredibly challenging, but also incredibly rewarding. It is what I have always wanted to do. It is a privilege like no other to represent one's country, to contribute and to make a difference to Australians' security and prosperity. I see diplomacy as an opportunity to connect people, build common ground, project Australia's values, principles and ideals to the world. I found this incredibly motivating."

There's nothing a woman can't do

When I visited Australia together with a Taiwanese Indigenous delegation back in May this year, our schedule was very busy, including a trip to Australia's Torres Strait, which has unique connections to Indigenous communities in Taiwan. While in transit in Melbourne, Jenny came to meet us at the hotel and we caught up over breakfast. We had a lengthy conversation about work, study, our lives and families but we also covered energy, the economy, national security and military reform; and about culture, art, language and ethnicity. In Taiwan, some may still believe that these issues are too "hard" for women to discuss. But for Australia's first woman ambassador to Greece, it's only natural that women should take the lead on these and other matters.

"We live in societies that are free and open and equal; where people, regardless of background, have opportunity. Women are more than half of the population. We really need to make sure that women are not only represented and can participate fully, but

that they are also able to lead. It's just so important; because we know that the more diverse an organization, the better the decisions, the stronger the outcomes."

Jenny has always believed strongly in the power of role models. If there is no 'precedent', girls will be less likely to realize their own potential. When there is a female CEO in the semiconductor industry, for example, many girls will realize that "girls can do it too". Once the ceiling is broken, a precedent set, then there will be a second, and a third. The same is true in diplomacy. When women ambassadors begin to appear, the first one will be followed by a second. If a country elects a female president, there will be another, there will be two. Only by charging ahead and breaking new ground can we open more doors and create more possibilities for those who come after us and want to follow. Being a woman leader and a role model is an important value in her own life – no matter how long the journey, the long road that women still have to go.

"There is much room for improvement, a lot of work we still have to do. Role models are crucial. We can only become what we see; or, to put it differently, we cannot be what we don't see."

She tells me about an exhibition at the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs in Canberra. Talking about it brings a sparkle to her eyes.

"There is an exhibition, "Portraits and Mirrors", back in my department in Canberra. It was launched on International Women's Day in 2020 by DFAT's first female Secretary, Frances Adamson, a former Australian representative in Taiwan. The exhibition features the portraits of the Australian women who were first appointed Ambassadors, Heads of Mission or Heads of Post throughout DFAT's history. For the countries or regions where there has not yet been a female Ambassador, a mirror is displayed instead. The message is clear – we want those who visit the exhibition, our young female diplomats, to see themselves reflected in the mirror. To aim for, and have ambition to do those jobs. As Australia's first female Ambassador to Greece, I am immensely proud to be a part of this exhibition, which will continue to be updated as more trailblazing women are appointed to represent Australia at the highest levels. I believe we have a responsibility to be good role models to other women and girls and to actively promote women in leadership.

There's no job that a woman can't do, or that only women can do. Jenny has always sought to inspire young women by doing things herself.

"If we don't see women leaders, we won't have women leaders. So our young girls need to see women in leadership positions – in industry, in government, in politics and in diplomacy."

From a practical standpoint, allowing women to participate in the workforce helps solve the problem of labor shortages.

"Industry everywhere is crying out for talent, for human capital. If we support women through the workforce, promote them to leadership positions, put in place the practical policies to support women in



the workplace and help them thrive, this will go a long way towards solving the problem of labor shortages. There are many incredibly talented women in Australia and in Taiwan. We need to give them the opportunity, to encourage and support women and girls to pursue careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). We need to be able to see women engineers, mathematicians, technicians, women in AI and in high-tech. It is not acceptable that in our fair and open and free societies, women continue to comprise such a small percentage of students in engineering and other STEM areas; or that so many highly trained women, women with PhDs, are forced to leave the workforce when they have a family. This is not a women's issue; it is a societal issue, as well as an economic issue. Our companies, and our national economies, will not be able to thrive without the full participation of half of the population, without some of our most talented people at the helm. I believe that, not only governments, but businesses too, need to do better, because they need talent. And this talent is available in our highly skilled, highly trained and highly performing women. They need to be supported to be able to enter, to continue, and to lead in these careers.

Whenever the discussion turns to language, Jenny seems to go into a different mode and become even more passionate.

"I grew up in a bilingual environment, speaking Greek with my parents at home and English with my friends at school. I find living in multilingual and multicultural environments very natural and enriching. Australia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse societies in the world, from Indigenous communities who have lived in Australia for many millennia to new migrants from every corner of the Earth. This diversity enriches our culture. It also helps us better connect with our region and the world" .

Migration from Greece to Australia peaked in the 1950's and 1960's after the second world war and the civil war in Greece, due to the Australian government's post-war immigration drive. Though there has not been much Greek migration to Australia since, Australia's Greek community is still estimated to number over 400,000, some 1.7% of Australia's population. Jenny's family immigrated to Australia due to close family connections (her uncle had migrated there in the 1960s). Besides English and Greek, Jenny has studied and speaks fluently several other languages.

"I studied French at university and, as a young student, relished the opportunity to spend time living and studying in France. Later, I also studied Italian and travelled to Italy. After I joined the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, my husband and I were posted to the Australian Embassy in Tehran, where I learnt Farsi; and following this, I learned Spanish during my husband's posting in

Buenos Aires, Argentina. There, I also studied Japanese in preparation for my own posting to Tokyo. I thoroughly enjoyed studying Japanese. Many people may not know that Japanese remains the most commonly studied language in Australia; there are more people who study Japanese in Australia per capita, than any other country outside of Japan" .

In Taiwan's diplomatic circles, Jenny was known as a gifted diplomat who spoke eight languages.

"My career has been incredibly enriching and rewarding. It has given me the unique opportunity to learn different languages, immerse myself in diverse cultures. I have been immensely privileged to be able to represent my country, Australia and its values of openness, diversity, opportunity, to the world. I was delighted to find in Taiwan an equally vibrant, open, culturally and linguistically diverse society."

Perhaps it's her immigrant DNA which makes her realize that "language is a tool" . If you don't speak the local language, it's not just day-to-day life that is impacted – simple things like buying groceries, taking the subway or communicating with locals. Language is essential to really understand the people, the culture, the politics, the economy, the history of a place and what makes it tick. In short, language helps you do a better job as a diplomat.

Jenny tells me that before coming to Taiwan, she studied Mandarin intensely. But when she landed in Taiwan, she remembers being surprised hearing her driver, the building staff, assistants at her residence and colleagues at her office speak a different language among themselves. She asked what language they were speaking. When they explained to her that they spoke Taiwanese, she suddenly felt that she understood something deeper about this place called Taiwan.

"When you lose language, you lose culture. Culture and language make us who we are, they are central to our identity, and they make society as a whole much richer. In Australia, as in Taiwan, the government is now fully focused on protecting and promoting language, and especially indigenous languages. I believe language is so central to identity and culture. I speak only a little Taiwanese, but I felt strongly that learning about it was essential for me to better understand this society and its people - their thoughts, their beliefs and their hopes for the future. I have also learned about Hakka, and indigenous languages. Connection to language, culture and community make us who we are; they need to be nurtured and protected."

Australia is an immigrant society that has embraced diversity, and Jenny's own family background has given her a deeply personal perspective. Ethnic nationalism has no place in Australia; the country's multicultural character continues to have strong public support – over 88%, according to a 2024 report. 87% of Australians also believed that immigrants were good for Australia's economy.

"What makes us Australian is not our cultural background, but our shared values and commitment to respecting each other."



From 2021 to 2022, as Australia's borders were shut during the COVID19 pandemic, Australia's immigrant population dropped dramatically. This led to labor shortages across all major industries, putting enormous pressure on the new Labor government. There were not enough doctors, nurses, construction workers, technicians, cooks, mining experts and so on. The new government, which wanted to boost economic growth post-COVID, found itself "trying to cook a meal with no rice", as the saying goes. So the government again turned to immigration. As the pandemic was ending, immigration - mostly from India, China, the Philippines and other Asian countries - increased dramatically, and by the end of 2023 the total population of the country had grown.

"What makes us Australians is not where we come from. It is not where we were born, or the language that we speak. Thirty per cent of Australians were born overseas; and half of all Australians were either born overseas, or have a parent who was born overseas. While of course not perfect, others can sometimes find it difficult to fully understand the open, diverse, fair and equal society that is Australia ."

The Australian government's pragmatic approach was not met with complaints about "foreigners stealing jobs from Australians." But by 2023 the surge in immigration had led to rising rents in Sydney and parts of Melbourne, which did cause public discontent. The Minister of Home Affairs nonetheless strongly defended the policy and praised immigrant communities for their contributions. Immigrants are an important part of the country's foundation; they have contributed to the building of modern Australia, according to Jenny, and Taiwanese immigrants have also become an important bridge for diplomacy.

"Australia takes in approximately 200,000 new immigrants every year. It's a very large number of skilled immigrants, mostly from our region, and they make a very important contribution to Australia's society and to our economy. And Taiwan is a big part of that too."

Jenny has a passion for multiculturalism and often mentions the 60,000 year history of Australia's Aboriginal people, as well as the connections between Taiwan's Austronesian Indigenous populations with Australia's Torres Strait Islanders. In 2022, she organized a "Contemporary Austral-

ia-Taiwan Indigenous Fashion Exhibition" in Tainan's Museum of Archaeology, attended by then Vice President Lai Ching-te, breaking away from the typical focus on traditional arts and crafts. She also recorded a video, posted on the Australian Office Facebook page, congratulating the Indigenous peoples of Taiwan on Taiwan's Indigenous Peoples' Day on August 1. She explained the Australian government's new 'First Nations Foreign Policy', in which indigenous-based interaction is no longer limited to culture, arts, or sports, but has grown to include economic and security related issues, among others.

Because of my work, I was often invited to the official residence of various foreign diplomats stationed in Taipei. Each had their own style when it came to decorating their residences. I visited the Australian representative's official residence a number of times while Jenny was stationed in Taiwan. The walls of the brightly-lit, top floor apartment in leafy Da'an were filled with the rich colours of spectacular paintings by Australian Aboriginal artists, her private collection. I studied Dreamtime paintings, which tell stories of creation and mythical times, drawn with dots and lines that conjure heaven and earth; the land, the stars, the rock pools, plants and animals, body painting designs from women's ceremonies. When we sat at the elegant dinner table, we discussed politics, regional security and economic cooperation; but we were always surrounded by the spirit of this ancient art, just as the ancestors were surrounded by creeks, ponds, seagulls, red dirt, crocodile, antelopes, flowers, trees, stars, and rainbows. It led us to reflect on our own humanity and surrender to the eternal truth of our own small place in the universe. And it made us more determined than ever to protect at all costs the knowledge, the practices, and the people, that are so culturally meaningful and central to our very own identity.

Jenny is still passionate about the world.

"I believe that diplomacy is really about building partnerships, finding common ground and connecting people to address shared challenges. Connecting with different cultures and societies is so incredibly enriching. Governments need to better connect with the public too. If there is no trust, no transparency, democracy is undermined. Only by clearly explaining challenges, proposing workable solutions, and consulting widely, within and between governments and with every part of society, earning and maintaining public trust, are we going to strengthen our democracies" .

Today, even after her retirement, Jenny continues to travel to and from Australia, Taiwan, Japan, and the European Union, cutting through oceans and soaring across different skies. She is meeting think tanks, addressing conferences, catching up with old friends. She has published several articles in different languages and is writing a book about her experience of migration. There is still much, she says, that she wants to achieve, to share, and to give back.

"I am excited to continue to contribute, to make a diffrence, from this other role."

Jenny smiles at me and her deep dimples appear, just like they did when she took up her first diplomatic assignment thirty years ago.

Women's Participation in Politics: Personal Effort and Collective Change

By **Hsu Liling**

Hsu Liling

Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes France , PhD in Religious Sciences

Peoplefish Poetry & Life Magazine has featured conservationists, entrepreneurs, and directors, as well as women involved in politics and public affairs. These Taiwanese women have carved out unique lives through their personal endeavors. Their professionalism and persistence have brought greater dynamism and diversity of thought to Taiwan's democracy.

This issue's front cover features Kolas Yotaka's conversation with her friend, former Australian Representative in Taiwan, Jenny Bloomfield. With this piece, a dialogue between two exceptional women, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the changes that women's involvement in politics, diplomacy and public life can bring to society.

A multilingual lawyer by training, former representative Bloomfield worked as an Australian diplomat for 30 years, a deliberate choice that she made as a young woman with an immigrant background eager to explore and change the world. She believed then, as now, that being a woman, getting involved in public and international affairs, and being passionate about it, can change the dynamics of society and bring new ideas to public policy. To set an example for younger women is to encourage them to venture into domains that, traditionally, have tended to be predominantly male.

Through Kolas's interview, we can see former representative Bloomfield's sincerity and persistence, as well as her deep understanding of and affection for Taiwan. Jenny's vision and ideas are also a gift that she is leaving to Taiwan, a society that still too often seems to be dominated by a strong patriarchal mindset. Reading her thoughts can help us break down gender-based assumptions and divisions and deepen Taiwan’s democracy.

Most Taiwanese are not that familiar with Australia, a country that, however, is not too far from us geographically.

Australia has a land area of more than 7 million square meters, the world's sixth-largest country, and 215 times the size of Taiwan. It has a population of more than 27 million people, 55th largest

in the world. Australia is also the world's 14th largest economy, ranked 10th globally in GDP per capita, and second in median wealth, according to Credit Suisse. In the recently concluded Paris Olympics, Australia won 18 gold medals, fourth-highest in the world.

A significant event in its history, the Eureka Rebellion of 1855, led the state of South Australia to become the first government in the world to use a secret ballot voting system. The secret ballot system that we are all familiar with today, in which a central election committee is set up, a list of candidates is printed in advance, and voters mark their ballots with an "X", was designed by William Boothby, Electoral Commissioner for South Australia from 1856 to 1903.

Australian women have participated in government affairs from the beginning of the 20th century, and since then, for over a hundred years, the trend of women's participation in politics and public life has made considerable gains. But the movement for gender equality still has a long way to go.

This interview is an intimate profile of Jenny Bloomfield, whose feminist thinking and commitment to Australia's democracy have led her to redefine concepts like civil service, diplomacy, public affairs, and having an impact. Reading it reminds us that politics and public service don't simply mean power, but also responsibility, duty, selflessness, dedication, contribution, and self-discipline.

In Jenny's Mandarin name "露珍怡", "怡" means "to have Taiwan in one's heart". Jenny's deep affection for Taiwan has been amply proven by her relentless efforts to promote Taiwan-Australia cooperation in many fields, including economic and trade, culture and education, and all this during the worst of the pandemic. Over June/July, less than one year since leaving office, Jenny returned to Taiwan to launch her book: "Celebration of Australia-Taiwan Friendship". At the launch event in Taipei on 1 July, Jenny said: "I was honored to personally experience the openness, diversity and resilience of Taiwan's society and to feel the warmth, hospitality and friendship of the Taiwan-

ese people. Taiwan's democratic achievements are remarkable and worthy of admiration and respect", she said, describing herself as a "forever friend" of Taiwan.

Jenny's life story brings to mind the theories of Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung on intrinsic masculinity and femininity, and 'individuation'.

Jung encouraged women to develop their masculine side. He believed that the integrity of life promoted by the combination of hardness and softness, and the integration of opposites, was the way a person should develop throughout his or her life, which he called the individuation process. He also encouraged men to develop their intrinsic femininity. Jung believed that human beings, regardless of gender, must fully develop their external and internal characteristics. Such integrity is not only invaluable to the individual, but can also transform human society.

Jung's theories and his own personal practice changed the lives of many, and inspired spiritual movements in Europe and the United States throughout the last century.

From the perspective of Jung's theory, women who participate in public affairs and other areas which used to be the exclusive domain of men, can serve as role models for others (regardless of gender). A society that maintains a patriarchal view of politics and public power based on the concepts of "power" and "fame and fortune", where "development" is the only goal, will keep causing immense harm to people's hearts, and to the balance of our earth's ecosystems.

We are happy to see women with vision and ideals like Jenny Bloomfield, who have the wisdom, warmth and pragmatism needed to be effective in public affairs, especially in the political and diplomatic arenas. As more and more women rise to the challenge, we believe that our society will become more harmonious and more whole.