

## Rowdy chorus of commonsense required

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It's never been more important for people with commonsense to start using their voices at full bore, writer and social commentator Jane Caro said.

"The agents of disinformation have had the space to themselves for far too long," Ms Caro told Federation's Women's Conference.

Federation Deputy President Joan Lemaire said collective action was a powerful voice and also encouraged "shouty voices".

"It is our shouty voices that have achieved everything for us," Ms Lemaire said.

Women were encouraged to ignore feelings of shame for "being too noisy, too Bolshy, too aggressive, too emotional ... over-reacting".

"We're often told that we're shrill or strident, we're talking too much, we're selfish," she said. "You know what? All of those things are good things. Be strident as you damn well like, I say.



"I find it really interesting that the term strident is only ever used by the powerful towards people or individuals or organisations that threaten them, so, you can be a strident unionist. The other word they use is militant — I'm a militant feminist, apparently.

"All those words are words that we should embrace rather than allow ourselves to be shamed by."

Ms Caro said she's noticed the word "shameless" was only ever used about women who stand up, "as if it's a bad thing".

"I would have thought to be shameless was awesome, frankly, and something to be worked towards," she said.

"What good does shame do anyone, except to cripple them and to silence them and control them?"

Workshop topics addressed a range of members' interests including union activism, juggling work and home, dealing with sensitive workplace issues, Performance Development Plans, Aboriginal education, the power of LGBTIQ+ voices and their allies, multicultural education and special education.

A panel of teachers shared their stories to explain how an intersectional perspective, i.e. recognising that everyone carries multiple identities (e.g. sexual, Aboriginal, refugee, poor), may assist in supporting students.

The popularity of a presentation by First State Super illustrated members' concern for their financial security.

