One of the highlights of the IPWEAQ Annual Conferences is always The Great Debate, which closes the final day. After three days of intensive learning and information sharing, this session offers a light-hearted finale to the conference by discussing a serious issue, tempered with humour and good-natured ribbing between the opposing teams.

The Great Debate is conducted in the traditional debate format with three speakers form each side allowed five minutes each to make their case. Past conferences have debated questions such as who makes the better engineers, women or men; or just how smart ‘smart cities’ really are. This year’s debate topic was “There is no place for tradition in the modern workplace”.

I was lucky enough to take part in the debate this year, and with Kym Murphy and Matthew Brennan made up the negative team arguing that there was indeed still a place for tradition in the contemporary work space. Our opponents in the affirmative team were a formidable bunch. To spice up a debate on tradition we had Ged Brennan, Matthew’s father on the other side, along with Jimmy Scott and Cate Fennell who was attending the conference as a representative from our IPWEA New South Wales division. The debate was moderated by the conference MC, Michael Pascoe, who managed to draw a lot of laughter from the audience with his famous quick wit.

There were very strong arguments from both sides, as we traded blow for blow. On stage, it felt like a very close contest that could have gone either way. At the end of the day though, there can only be one winner. I’d never want to be accused of being a spoiler, so you’ll just have to hop on to the knowledge centre to discover how it all panned out. The only hint I’ll give about the outcome is that it would be fair to say the best team won.

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