

**UNIFEM International Women's Day – Breakfast -Toast to IWD
Convention Centre
6 March 2008**

Her Excellency Quentin Bryce, AC, Governor of Queensland; the Hon Anna Bligh, MP, Premier of Queensland; the Hon Margaret Keech MP, Minister for Women, Judges of the Supreme Court; Rt Hon Campbell Newman, Lord Mayor of Brisbane; Chief Judge Wolfe and Judges of the District Court; Judges of the Land Court, Magistrates, President of the UNIFEM Committee, Ms May Lamont, guest speakers Ms Wafa Abdel Rahman and Ms Romy Shapira from the International Women's Commission and distinguished guests – as you all are:

I acknowledge with respect and gratitude the traditional owners of these southern banks of the Brisbane River, the Jagara people. For tens of thousands of years they have nurtured this land. Their wise women ancestor elders have held meetings and celebrations, not so very different from this morning's breakfast. Like me, I know you, too, feel honoured to share today's celebration with our Indigenous sisters. We look forward to achieving with them our joint hopes and our common dreams for Queensland, for Australia and for the world. Having heard Joyrah Sebasio from Ipswich Girls Grammar School this morning, the future is bright.

Almost 100 years ago on the 8th of March 1908, 15,000 women garment workers marched through New York City demanding shorter working hours, better pay and voting rights. They were attacked and dispersed by police but their bold struggle did not pass unnoticed. Three years later, the 8th of March became International Women's Day, a celebration and awareness-raising of women's role in society.

In Queensland, with our amazing Governor, Quentin Bryce, as first lady (the 2nd woman to fill that role); with our first woman Premier, Anna Bligh; with almost 35% of our members of parliament women; and with one third of our Supreme Court judges women, we like to think we are little ahead of the rest of the world. Perhaps that's why we celebrate International Women's Day with this breakfast on the 6th of March – 48 hours early!

A word of welcome, too, for our Lord Mayor, Campbell Newman and for the other sprinkling of men present this morning. Thank you for joining us in this celebration. We do not forget that good-hearted right-minded men have helped women achieve so much since the mid-1800s.

We do not forget that it was a man, John Stuart Mill, who in the mid-1800s was the first voice in a parliament to call for equality for women, and to champion women's right to vote and their access to compulsory education and birth control.

And we do not forget the struggle of the women of past generations – the suffragettes and first wave feminists, and the 20th century second wave feminists, some of whom are here today, who have worked so hard to achieve, at least for us in Australia, Mill's vision.

Today is not just for remembering. It is also for celebrating. We celebrate the trail-blazing women in Queensland, in Australia, and throughout the world, who have attained high public office in the legislature, the judiciary and the executive.

We celebrate that Queensland women can participate fully in the public life of their state.

We celebrate that women's voices are heard, clear and loud, in Parliament, in the enforcement of the rule of law, in the media and at the highest levels of the education system and of policy making.

But today is about more than remembering and celebrating. It is also a day for looking forward. We know that the cause for celebration for Queensland women is not the reality for most of the world's women. We know that it is not the reality for many Indigenous women living in remote Australian communities. We know that we must be vigilant to protect the gains made by our feminist forebears and that, locally and globally, too many challenges for women remain unmet.

We look forward with hope to changing the present world reality through organisations like UNIFEM and its International Women's Commission in a quest for a just peace.

We look forward with hope to working with our Indigenous sisters to ensure their voices are also heard clearly and loudly.

We look forward with hope to protecting gains already made and meeting the many local and global challenges facing women, today and in the future. The world will be better for all of us – women, children and men.

The concept of a toast at breakfast can be confusing: no bubbles and toast is a traditional breakfast food! Do we eat or do we sip?

But there can be no confusion about why we are here, what we are remembering, what we are celebrating and what we will strive for in the future. Please stand and join me in toasting International Women's Day.