

Who are the significant women in your life? Who are the women from whom you draw inspiration and encouragement? Which women are for you the cause of greater hope?

At the end of this week we recognise International Women's Day. Celebrated on 8th March each year, this day has come to be strongly acknowledged on the calendar of government, corporate, school and private organisations over the past few years.

International Women's Day was first celebrated in the United States in 1909. The first time that Australians marked the day with a rally held in Sydney's Domain in 1928. These initial celebrations were opportunities for women to come together around the issue of the women's right to vote, to stand for peace in the face of devastating and widespread war, and to express their solidarity with women throughout the world. Such gatherings gave stimulus to the early versions of the feminist movement across Europe and the United States.

I might hear you ask why we need to continue this day of recognition now in the 21st century. After all, women have the right to vote, they have as many opportunities as do men to work for peace and they have access to whatever type of work they choose. That is true in our Australian experience.

However, let's look at some statistics. While these figures are slowly improving, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions in both government and private organisations across Australia. In Queensland, women hold 29.2% of Chief Executive Officer positions in the state public service, 14.9% of Queensland's Mayors are women, and only 16.7% of District Court judges are women.

It is encouraging that increasing numbers of younger men are actively engaged in the care of young children; however, it is also interesting to note that while 33% of employed fathers take advantage of flexible work arrangements to meet family responsibilities, 73.0% of employed mothers make use of the same flexibility in their working arrangements.

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The colours originated with the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), in the UK in 1908. The colours were said to represent: white for purity; purple for dignity, self-reverence and self-respect; and green for hope and new life.

The colours unified the movement and also emphasised the femininity of the suffragettes.

Refer to web-site