



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Wednesday, 8 March 2006

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.20 am): International Women's Day presents an opportunity to celebrate the gains women have made as well as highlight future challenges. It will also be an opportunity for the Queensland coalition to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the introduction of paid maternity leave for the Queensland Public Service by the coalition government in 1996. In addition, this year also marks the 20th anniversary of the first woman being appointed to cabinet in Queensland and the 10th anniversary of the first woman becoming deputy premier.

The year 2006 marks the 10th anniversary of the coalition introducing paid maternity leave for the Public Service which is one of the single greatest moves for advancement of women in the workplace in recent decades. Despite all the meaningless rhetoric of Labor, it never introduced paid maternity leave into the Public Service. It took a coalition government to do that in 1996 and I was proud to be part of that government.

I particularly pay tribute to the then deputy premier and minister for women's policy, Joan Sheldon, who spearheaded the move. This was a passion of hers, because when she was in opposition she saw Labor only talk about women's issues. It took her appointment as Deputy Premier and Treasurer for anything meaningful to be achieved. The coalition cabinet formally ratified its decision to introduce paid maternity leave in May 1996, and the initiative was fully funded in the coalition's first state budget of that year.

This year also marks the 10th anniversary of the coalition's Joan Sheldon becoming the first woman to hold the post of Deputy Premier and Treasurer—an achievement Labor has only matched 10 years later. This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the Nationals' Yvonne Chapman becoming the first woman in the Queensland cabinet when she became minister for youth and ethnic affairs in February 1986.