



Speech by

## Karen Struthers

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Ms STRUTHERS** (Algeria—ALP) (11.57 am): Thursday, 8 March is International Women's Day, and what a great day that is. Today I acknowledge the many resourceful women who are working in non-traditional trades and industries throughout Queensland. In Queensland and around Australia we face a critical skills shortage, and more and more organisations and governments are relying on women to take up the challenge and get involved in non-traditional industries such as construction and building and mining. I am sure that my good friend the member for Fitzroy would love to see more women in the mining industry.

It is very important that women and young girls who are still at school see that there are magnificent opportunities in the non-traditional areas. So far, the gains have been fairly slow, although the trend is positive. As at 1 July 2004, there were about 1,700 females training in non-traditional areas in Queensland. That was up from 1,200 or so as at 1 July 1999. That is not a great gain in a five-year period.

Fifteen per cent of Queensland's apprentices are female and those women mostly work in areas such as hairdressing. Although those areas offer great career opportunities, sadly, for women the pay differentials are quite significant. We must do something about pay in those areas. Great numbers of women go into traditional trades like hairdressing and child care, where the average pay is about \$15 an hour. However, we all know that some blokes in the construction industry can pull in big money, particularly if they work in regional areas.

**Ms Jones:** One hundred thousand.

**Ms STRUTHERS:** I take that interjection from the member for Ashgrove. Some of those guys can earn \$100,000 a year. I am not saying that they do not deserve it; I am sure that they do. However, in the lead-up to International Women's Day, I say, go girls! My plea to women is to consider looking into some of the non-traditional areas and find out what they are all about.

I commend young women like Sarah Henry, a 24-year-old woman who has taken up an opportunity at SkillsTech, the new world-class training centre at Acacia Ridge in my local area. Sarah is a talented and accomplished soprano singer who holds a Bachelor of Education but has decided to take up an apprenticeship in carpentry. Good on her; that is the sort of role model we want.

**Mr Pearce:** She can sing while she works.

**Ms STRUTHERS:** That is right. She can sing while she works. She will be singing from the rooftops of Brisbane sometime soon. We will all hear her. Good on you, Sarah, you are a great role model. We need to see more women take advantage of those wonderful opportunities that SkillsTech at Acacia Ridge are providing.

Lisa Finch is another wonderful woman who is one of the lead apprentices on the Be Constructive campaign. I commend the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund for that very, very good campaign. It is encouraging young men and women to get involved in the building industry trades. Lisa is certainly a great role model as an apprentice carpenter; she is doing great stuff. Another great organisation, the Queensland Plumbers Union, is sponsoring, with the Department of Education, Training

and the Arts, 20 women into plumbing apprenticeships in the coming years. That is a great initiative. Plumbing is an area where we have skills shortages and where people can make pretty good money. Again I say: go girls, have a look at these trades and see what wonderful opportunities are there.

The Queensland government is to be commended for the very good initiatives that are being taken under the Queensland Skills Plan and the education and training reform agenda for the future. It is encouraging young women to take up trade opportunities and certainly providing opportunities whilst they are at school to have a go. Again I say to young women to try the trade facility at the SkillsTech institute at Acacia Ridge; they will certainly find some wonderful opportunities there.

The Queensland Resources Council is keen to lift the current percentage of women in the resources industry from six per cent. That is a pretty low number of women who are engineers, truck drivers, geologists and others in the mining industry. There are very few CEOs, I would imagine, too. The QRC is to be commended for putting out the call for more resourceful women in the mining and other industries. Good on them as well.

I make a very, very important call today for young women to consider these opportunities. There have been gains but there is more to do. In the lead-up to International Women's Day let me put a few challenges for women on the record. This morning we heard speeches from the ministers that violence against women still continues to be at intolerably high levels and we have to deal with that. Women and housing is a big issue. Women make up 70 per cent of the homeless. Single mothers are overrepresented amongst homeless families, comprising 85 per cent of those assisted through the SAAP program. We are seeing a lot of women and kids being duded by their former partners not paying maintenance; we need to see improvements there. There is an amount of \$460 million outstanding in support payments. That is \$460 million that is not going to kids.

Time expired.