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Launch of Northern Territory
tribute to women - International
Women's Day
Hon Clare Martin MLA
Chief Minister

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Welcome to the Deputy Administrator of the Northern Territory, Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Alice Springs, and guests.

I am delighted to be here in Central Australia to celebrate International Women's Day.

I have three pleasant duties to perform today:

1. To honour the contribution of 12 very special Territory women who will be honoured in our Tribute to Northern Territory Women.
2. To formally present the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame's signature quilt.
3. To present the 2003 Women's Advisory Council media awards to two worthy recipients.

Over the years International Women's Day has become a worldwide celebration recognising and honouring the struggle by women to achieve equality and justice.

Since 1976, Territory Women have built up a strong tradition of celebrating this day in many different ways – through rallies, marches, cultural and community events, and more.

This year we continue those celebrations.

In the Territory we are able to celebrate our proud history of strong women making real and effective contributions to our economic, social and cultural life.

Their strength was evident in the way they helped hold their communities together in times of change and challenge.

Given our unique conditions and the Territory's isolation, their stories are all the more fascinating.

We can also celebrate how far we have come. Today women's contribution to society is much more recognised and valued, in part because of our celebrations.

Despite this women are still tend to be in the minority in public roles, particularly in business and decision-making.

Australia has not yet had a female Prime Minister and, while the numbers of women in Parliaments throughout Australia are rising, we are still under-represented in many levels of politics.

The Territory has one of the highest levels of representation in the country with 7 women out of 25 members in the Legislative Assembly. However, this is still less than one-third.

After coming to power, my Government found that only 24.8% of members on Territory Government statutory bodies are women. This is an under-representation that my Government is keen to address.

Society needs the voices of all its members. Women have a lot to contribute, and I'd like to see more of us involved in decision-making at all levels.

The practical experience that women have in managing day-to-day family life and juggling competing demands is experience badly needed in politics.

Politics also requires understanding, perseverance, and commitment— these are all qualities that most women have in abundance!

We have come a long way in bringing childcare, education and other issues that used to be seen as women's issues into the mainstream.

This Government wants to encourage and support women to be agenda setters and to help shape the policies of the future.

In May 2002, I determined that all submissions to Cabinet and to individual Ministers involving appointments to Government Boards and committees contain:

First, a breakdown of current membership by gender; and secondly, where women do not make up 50% of membership, a plan to redress the imbalance.

To track this initiative, data is being collected quarterly. While this process has been in place for only a short time, already we have seen an increase in the number of women on boards and committees.

The NT Women's Register, which identifies and retains the details of women available for nomination to Government Boards and committees, is also being improved and updated. The Office of Women's Policy, maintains the register and is helping to suggest suitable applicants for vacancies.

Tribute

Now, turning to the first of my duties today: the announcement of the first women to be honoured in our Tribute to Territory women -- I announced the establishment of the Tribute last International Women's Day.

The Tribute is in two locations: in Darwin's Damoe-Ra Park, and here in Alice Springs. The pathway here in Alice Springs will incorporate special plaques depicting the women and their stories. In Damoe-Ra Park the pathway will feature specially designed tiles.

You will also see the special collection of posters to highlight the names added to the Tribute each year. The Office of Women's Policy will regularly tour the posters throughout the Territory, so that all Territorians will have access to these fascinating stories.

The Tribute also provides an opportunity to showcase the creative talents of Territory women who will be invited to design the posters and plaques each year.

Before I announce the first women to be honoured, I would like to congratulate Cindy Rosenbaum who designed and developed the posters and plaques for the 2003 Tribute.

Announcement of tribute women.

The 12 women being honoured in today's Tribute have been nominated by a range of individuals, community groups and organisations.

The members of the selection panel were Alison Anderson, ATSIC Central Australian Commissioner, Nola Smith, Senior Territorian of the Year, and Vicki Schultz, a former Chair of the Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians.

And now to announce the women

Barbara James - Born in Nebraska, USA, Barbara came to Darwin in the 1960s. She has worked in a variety of fields, as a journalist, historian, author, activist, advocate, writer and editor. Barbara has used her considerable skills and knowledge of local history to promote and help preserve our heritage and to pioneer the Northern Territory's oral history program.

Mrs Lily Ah Toy was born in 1917 and lived until the age of 84. Lily grew up in Darwin but moved to Pine Creek when she married Jimmy Ah Toy in 1936. After the bombing of Darwin in 1942 Lily was evacuated to Adelaide but returned to Pine Creek in 1945 to manage the general store. In 1982, at the age of 65, Lily graduated from NTU with a Diploma in Ceramics.

Ms Dawn Lawrie has played a significant role in Territory politics, particularly in the first years of self-government. Dawn served 12 years in the NT Legislature. Much of her work has focussed on human rights, including extensive work with migrant and culturally diverse communities. Her daughter, Delia, was elected Member for Karama at the last election.

Mrs Phoebe Farrar was born at Fish River, NSW in 1862 and is remembered as a pioneer of the Territory bush. In 1876, her family left Sydney for Arnhem Land, building a homestead on the Limmen River. Phoebe learnt the skills of a jillaroo. She was working in the stockyards at the age of 71 when she was severely injured by a bull. Within 12 months she was walking again, and mustering cattle as usual. Phoebe died at the age of 92 having contributed significantly to the Territory cattle industry.

Ms Natalie Harwood is a young Aboriginal woman who is involved in numerous community development projects. Vice-President of Bagot Community Council, Natalie established the Bagot Breakfast program to ensure a healthy meal for the community's children. She also acts as a mentor for younger girls, particularly counselling against substance abuse. As well as her family commitments and community work, Natalie plays women's basketball and was selected for the Aboriginal NT team in 2002.

Mrs Eileen Fitzer was an entertainer, nurse, political activist and Territory pioneer. Born in Darwin in 1902, her parents were among the earliest European settlers in the Territory. In 1921, Eileen supported Darwin citizens who had voluntarily gone to the Fannie Bay Gaol for refusing to pay taxes until they received Parliamentary representation. After training as a nurse in Melbourne, Eileen married and moved to mining fields near Tennant Creek in 1939. She was then asked to relieve at Channel Island Leprosarium. Her first husband died in 1943 and she married Tas Fitzer in 1945. Eileen was awarded the Order of the British Empire for her services to nursing and the Territory. Eileen died in Darwin in August 2001.

Mrs Cynthia Molina is a well-respected leader in the Territory's Asian community. Arriving in Darwin in 1972, one of her most notable achievements was co-founding the Asian-Australian Association. She has also worked with the YWCA and the National Council of Women. In 1983 she was awarded the Order of Australia, the first Asian woman and the first Filipina in the NT to receive this award. In 2000 she received the Senior Citizen of the Year Award from the Filipino Community Council. On top of all her community work, she has found the time to raise 6 children.

Mrs Mayse Young arrived in the Territory with her family in 1927, moving two years later to run the Pine Creek Hotel. Mayse became a real outback identity contributing much to her community, and her story is told in her book "No Place for a Woman". Mayse has become an accomplished artist, dividing her time between the Territory and Adelaide.

Ms Eileen Cummings, born in central Arnhem Land, is a member of the

'stolen generation'. The first qualified Aboriginal teacher in the Territory, she has dedicated much of her life to addressing alcohol and violence issues. Eileen, mother of three and grandmother to ten, is well known for her humanitarian work and is widely respected.

Mrs Christina Black came to Australia in 1974, and accompanied her husband on research trips, living in Aboriginal communities. Later she taught at the School of Australian Linguistics at Batchelor College. Christina is involved with the Filipiniana Senior Citizens Association (FSCA) and is president of the Filipino Community Council of the NT. She has received the Community Leadership Award, and the Volunteer Achievement Award from the Multicultural Council of NT.

Mrs Phoebe Doreen Lee was born at Murray Bridge South Australia in 1904. After the war her family returned to the Territory and moved to Esmeralda Station near Pine Creek. Here Phoebe taught her children by correspondence, established a large fruit and vegetable garden, and bred animals. In 1971, and well into her 60s, Phoebe started a plant nursery known to everyone as Gran's Nursery. She died just short of her 96th birthday.

Finally Mrs Jose Petrick, who we honour today for her contribution to our community as a well-known historian and author. Born in England in 1924, she came to the Territory as Governess on Macdonald Downs Station, 300 km north-east of Alice Springs. Jose has worked as a journalist with the Centralian Advocate and has written and researched for the National Trust. She was also postmistress at the Overland Telegraph Service. In May 1989 her book *The History of Alice Springs Through Street Names* was published. Jose was awarded an Order of Australian Medal for history in 1999.

The Tribute provides our community with the opportunity to appreciate and acknowledge the contribution of these inspirational women.

I hope that the women we are honouring today will continue to be a source of inspiration and encouragement for the future generations of Northern Territory Women.

Signature Quilt.

Turning to my second duty, to launch the signature quilt, first some background.

The National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame has conceived the Signature Quilt project to enable us to look back and celebrate the achievements of Australian women who have been leaders in their field over the last 100 years.

There are two identical quilts. One will be displayed here at the Hall of Fame as an inspirational "Patchwork of Empowerment".

The other is in two parts and will be raffled to raise funds for the Hall of Fame's new building. These quilts will be displayed here during the raffle period.

The project was the brainchild of Jan Millington. Jan, who is a member of both the Hall of Fame and the Alice Springs Quilting Club, coordinated the making of the quilts with Julie Heller.

The Curator of the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame, Pauline Cockrill, was responsible for coordinating the research and selection process for the quilts.

The result is a quilt containing the signatures of 342 women from all over Australia, all of whom were first in their field.

I am very proud that 40 Territory women are represented on the quilts, and feel particularly honoured that I was invited to contribute.

Each of the women who has signed the quilt has been first in her field, whether at a national, state or territory level or in her community.

Signatories on the quilt include Gillian Armstrong, Elizabeth Evatt, Dawn Fraser, Cathy Freeman, Carmen Lawrence, Lowitja O'Donohue and Territorians Maggie Hickey, Loraine Braham and Denise Allen.

The quilt on exhibition will complement the Hall of Fame's permanent exhibition "Ordinary Women/Extraordinary Lives: Women First in their Field".

I have much pleasure in launching the Signature Quilt today and I feel sure that it will inspire and be appreciated by many Australians.

I wish the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame all the best with the raffle and I am certainly looking forward to buying my ticket.

Women's Advisory Council 2003 Media Award

My third pleasant duty is to announce the recipients of the Women's Advisory Council's Media Award for 2003.

Two Alice Springs journalists Megg Kelham and Maria [no surname] have shared the prize. Both women are journalists on 8 Triple C, Community Radio here in Central Australia.

Megg's work, the Breast Show, was an informal and novel approach to radio journalism. The program painted a humorous portrait of a health issue that affects so many women's lives.

Maria's entry, on the subject of Youth Depression, was a sensitive portrayal of a difficult topic.

While Megg was unable to be here to receive her award, I have great pleasure in asking Maria to come forward and receive this certificate and cheque from the Women's Advisory Council.

My last duty, but a very pleasant one, is to wish everyone a Happy International Women's Day.

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