



**Launch of “A Woman’s Place: 100 years of
Queensland Women Lawyers”
Banco Court
Wednesday 9 November 2005**

**The Hon P de Jersey AC,
Chief Justice**

Your Excellency and Mr Bryce, Your Honours, including Justice Mackenzie, Chair of the Supreme Court Library Committee, ladies and gentlemen.

I warmly welcome you all, and particularly Her Excellency the Governor. This is the second time today the Governor has graced the court with her presence, and we are most grateful.

I also specially acknowledge the attendance of Brisbane elders and other indigenous leaders and friends: always welcome, always appreciated and respected.

Today began memorably in this courthouse with our ceremonial sittings to acknowledge the centenary of the enactment of the *Legal Practitioners Act* 1905. The very large attendance bore wonderful testimony to the significance of that milestone. This evening, we move from the legislation as such, to the actual contribution it facilitated.

That contribution is excellently canvassed in what is the Supreme Court Library Committee’s most ambitious publication project to date. Our book is of course “A Woman’s Place: 100 years of Queensland Women Lawyers”. It is, dare I propagandize, tremendously interesting in each of its 865 pages, which includes profiles on as many as 52 women lawyers. The profiles have been written by others, the writer selected or approved by the subject. In itself an interesting aspect of the publication, is the engaging variety of approaches by the writers. The book concludes with about 50 pages of the “future visions” of 13 of the State’s recent and outstanding women law graduates, followed by a most useful collection of historical data.

The publication is unique – not just to Queensland, or even Australia, but unique in the under-used true sense of that word. I am assured of that by our superlatively well-



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informed Librarian Mr Rahemtula, whose encyclopaedic knowledge lets me make that claim of uniqueness with absolute assurance. Another first for Queensland...no, we would better say, another first for our Librarian and his Committee, upon whose creativity we can always rely.

The project was rendered possible by substantial financial assistance from organizations noted for their predictable support for the recording of important social history: I especially acknowledge the support of the University of Queensland, the QUT Faculty of Law and the Griffith Law School.

It is the main event, the panel discussion, which will primarily interest you this evening, and I must not unduly delay it. But please pardon my mentioning two other matters. First, the exhibition mounted outside – the photographic display on the elegant banners, 850 individual photographs, together with the listing of all women practitioners admitted up until September 2005 – don’t miss it; and second, the attractive merchandise: the Library Committee offers you specially crafted, beautiful products which we hope will entice. The banners, by the way, should travel to other State centres, and we are hoping for a grant from the Office of Women to enable that.

In launching this interesting work this evening, I also acknowledge with gratitude the review committee, which met regularly throughout the progress of the 18 month project. We were extremely privileged that Her Excellency the Governor led and inspired that committee. The other members were Justice Margaret McMurdo, the President of the Court of Appeal, Ms Rachel Hunter, the Director-General, Ms Susan Purdon, Ms Elizabeth Nosworthy, Ms Olga Buchanan, Ms Anne-Marie Rice, Ms Anne Wallace, Ms Rachael Murray, Ms Lorraine Blanco and Mr Aladin Rahemtula.

And finally, I congratulate the editors, Ms Susan Purdon and Mr Rahemtula on an exercise in magnificent coordination.



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I conclude by sharing, if a little unusually, a selection of some of the other mooted names for this work. They were all perceptive, and betray something of the character of the publication. They were:

Portia Picks the Big Pineapple; The Road to Robed Revolution; Gender, no agenda: a century of women in the law in Queensland; and Ladies-in-law.

I am very pleased now formally to launch, "A Woman's Place: 100 years of Queensland Women Lawyers".

Having done that, may I thank Professor Hay, Vice Chancellor of UQ, for that university's financial support of this evening's event; and the firm Hopgood and Ganim, through Mr Bruce Humphries, for sponsoring the reception to follow the panel discussion.