

**THE HON KATE ELLIS MP
MINISTER FOR THE STATUS OF WOMEN
MEDIA RELEASE**

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100 years of International Women's Day

The Minister for the Status of Women, Kate Ellis, today launched the beginning of a year of celebrations to mark the 100th Anniversary of International Women's Day in 2011.

The first International Women's Day rallies were held in March 1911, inciting what would become a world-wide movement to champion the cause of equality for women.

"The centenary of International Women's Day is an opportunity for us to celebrate the extraordinary women who have broken down so many barriers throughout the last 100 years," Ms Ellis said.

"That women of my generation can take their place in Parliament is a testament to their spirit, their courage and their sheer fortitude.

"I hope that throughout the coming year of celebrations, all Australian women are inspired to continue in their footsteps and take up the challenge to bring about positive and lasting change for women around the world."

In the centenary year 2011, UNIFEM Australia will become part of the new global institution 'UN Women' supported by 14.5 million in core funding over two years from the Gillard Government.

"Our Government is proud to announce this funding for UN Women, which will support international efforts to empower women and promote equality," Ms Ellis said.

To mark the International Women's Day celebrations, the Government is also providing \$210,000 to the six National Women's Alliances and \$100,000 to UN Women to coordinate a host of projects, activities and events across the country.

These activities will include the *100 companies for 100 years* campaign, which aims to get 100 leading Australian companies to sign up to a charter of principles supporting women in the workplace.

Centenary projects will also include secondary school kits to engage young people in political participation and leadership, as well as a range of activities to address issues such as body image, the gender pay gap, the contribution of immigrant and refugee women, and the celebration of inspirational Indigenous women.

Australia Post will support the centenary celebrations with a commemorative stamp combining images and graphic elements, including the symbol for women and the recognised colours green, white and purple.

“The Gillard Government is proud to support UNIFEM Australia and the National Women’s Alliances in their work to advance the cause for all Australian women, and already much has been achieved in the past three years,” Ms Ellis said.

“The introduction of Australia’s first Paid Parental Leave scheme coincides with the centenary year, and this important reform will provide Australian women and their families with greater financial support and better opportunities for workforce participation.

“But there is still much work to be done to address the subtle barriers that preclude women being able to participate equally in all aspects of life.

“The Australian Government will continue to give a high priority to women’s issues, including reducing violence against women, ensuring women’s economic security and supporting women’s leadership.

“I encourage all Australians, women and men, to get involved with the centenary celebrations for International Women’s Day and act to promote positive change for women in their everyday lives.”

For more information on the centenary events, visit UNIFEM Australia’s International Women’s Day website www.internationalwomensday.org.au

Minister Ellis’ media contact: Elissa McKay 0417 803 403