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Launch of New System – Changing Community Initiatives

Communities in Control Conference
Melbourne, 31 May, 2011

Presentation by

Senator Kate Lundy

**Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Parliamentary Secretary for
Immigration and Multicultural Affairs**

Senator Kate Lundy:

Thank you so much for that lovely warm welcome. Everybody here, thank you so much for the opportunity to talk about Australian honours and Australian women.

Just to give you a little bit of background, my formal position in the Federal Government now is Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. It's in this second role that I have executive responsibility for the administration of the honours system.

So you can imagine how thrilled I was to hear of this initiative. Its timing is perfect. It touches a chord I think with all Australians who want to see the institutions of government reflect our genuine diversity and who we are as an Australian society.

You don't need to look too far into the statistics to know that we have a challenge ahead of us making sure that our Australian honours reflect our gender balance in our society.

This booklet, *Advancing Women – Women and the Order of Australia*, is a joint project of the Women's Leadership Institute of Australia and Our Community, the co-hosts, of course, of this amazing conference.

About 13 years ago when I met Carol (Schwartz), I found her so completely inspiring. Here was a successful business woman that found the time to further the cause of not only celebrating the leadership roles of women in business in Australia but, as this initiative shows, taking it always that one step further. Carol, you've been an inspiration to me personally and professionally since I met you and I'd like to thank you for that.

The Women's Leadership Institute was formed by Carol, as many of you here would know, as a vehicle for increasing the number of women in leadership positions in Australia. Carol practices what she preaches and this is the first specific project of the Institute.

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The campaign is designed to boost the numbers of women recognised through the Australian honours system. Over the past decade only around a third of awardees have in fact been women. The trend line is going down, not up. That's bad. We need to fix that.

Too few women receive honours because too few women are nominated. Well, that is something we can fix. Just over half of all people who are nominated for an award in the Order of Australia get one. In fact, women who are nominated generally, statistically, tend to do better than men.

If we can boost the number of women nominees then I think it goes without saying that we can improve the number of women receiving rewards.

The campaign centres around a new guide because for many people it's a bit of a mystery: How do you nominate someone for an Australian honour, for an Order of Australia? How do we encourage people to think about the women in their lives, in their communities, that have done something worthy under our honours system? And what's worthy? Is it something that they've done for their local community, something they've done that's made an impact in their state, in their region, perhaps a national impact?

All of these questions are answered in this wonderful publication that I'm here to formally launch, *Advancing Women – Women and the Order of Australia*.

There's very practical information all the way through, but Chapter 7, *Telling the Story*, gives you some suggestions about what to think about in articulating why the person you'd like to nominate ought to be considered.

Your story might be structured along these sorts of lines: *There was a problem, a serious problem that no-one could fix. Many people tried perhaps over many, many years. Then someone special stepped forward and was able to make all of the difference. They struggled against all of the known barriers, the systemic challenges that had made that problem intractable and they made many personal sacrifices to see that challenge through. They overcame the problem and it made a big difference to many people's lives.*

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It's the story of the Lord of the Rings, of Robin Hood, the Odyssey, the Quest for the Holy Grail, your local school's last lamington drive. It's a universal story.

We all know someone like this in our lives. We all know women who have made an extraordinary difference in ways that we might not have thought are worthy of lifting up and celebrating in this formal way in the eyes of the nation.

Well, this guide, I hope, will inspire you to think again about the inspiring women that you've known through your life, through your profession, through your family, through your community.

However you know these women, please this year have a think about it, lift them up and help us all celebrate their achievements.

It's my great pleasure, Carol, to be here to launch this. Congratulations to both Our Community and to the Women's Leadership Institute. You have done Australian women a great service by the publication of this booklet and I'm really pleased and proud that you've asked me to launch it here today at this wonderful conference.

Thank you very much.

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