

Centenary Speech for Tree Planting on 8 October 2021

Hello to you all,

For those who do not know me, my name is Sharon Norton, and it is my great pleasure and honour, as the president of Soroptimist International Adelaide Club to welcome you today to celebrate the centenary of Soroptimist International.

I would like to first acknowledge the Kurna people as the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, and recognise their spiritual connection to the land, waters and skies, and to pay my respects to the elders, past, present and emerging.

I would like to welcome Anne Berry, President of Soroptimist International Region of South Australia, members and staff of the Adelaide City Council, members from Soroptimist International of Adelaide and other South Australian Soroptimist clubs and friends of Soroptimist. I would also like to welcome this lovely weather and invite it to stay.

We meet here today to celebrate 100 years of Soroptimist, a worldwide volunteer service organization for women who work for peace, and in particular to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world. Our membership work on grassroots projects that help women and girls achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in communities worldwide.

We meet to plant a tree in recognition of this significant centenary and momentous occasion, with the hope too that one day it will reach one hundred years of growth, evolution and benefit to the world. There are many similarities between the tree we will plant and members of Soroptimist International. By itself, a tree will do good. In numbers trees, will support the habitat around them, improve the climate and environment, provide cover for those that need it and make the world a much brighter and safer place.

I invite members of Soroptimist International of Adelaide to join me in helping to plant this beautiful tree.

(plant tree)

I would like to handover now to one of Soroptimist International of Adelaide's longest standing members, and a changemaker for women and girls in her own right, Pat Ellis. Pat will share some of the history of Soroptimist.

Pat to speak. Pat unveils the plaque.

Pat has spoken of the interesting and impressive history of Soroptimist. And going forward there is much to be excited about too. The need for the advancement of the rights of women and girls, for cultural change to promote respect for women and girls is as great now as it has ever been.

The causes we support may have changed over time, but the principles remain the same. At a global level, Soroptimist is embarking on a campaign 'Opening Doors for a Bright Future', which will establish appeals in all 5 of the Federations, including the new federation of Africa. The first of the appeals will be devoted to giving education and mentorship to 10 to 15 year old girls in Cambodia. Extensive work is currently being done by Soroptimists across the globe to end human trafficking. Advocacy is currently being undertaken across the globe by Soroptimists in relation to eliminating domestic violence and making communities safer for women and girls. Projects increasingly focus on

the effect of climate change on us all, but particularly the profound impact this has especially on women and girls.

At a local level, Soroptimist of Adelaide members are currently participating in Steptober, a walking fundraiser to raise money for talking realities, a program which supports young parents in gaining education, employment and parenting skills. Soroptimist Adelaide is currently preparing for its annual domestic violence forum and recently catered meals to the homeless at the Magdalene Centre. Soroptimist is advocating for the decriminalisation of sex work, for penalties for coercive and controlling behaviour by domestic violence perpetrators, and for safe and affordable housing for women.

Over the last 100 years, Soroptimist has improved the lives of women and children, I can't wait to see what we can do, in the spirit of friendship and service of Soroptimist in the next 100 years.

Before I close, I would like to thank the people who have made this event possible. I would like to thank Martin Cook and the Adelaide City Council, Pam, Marrion and Lesley from our club for making all of the arrangements.

I thank you all for your presence, and invite those joining us for lunch to move to Rydges where we can all share this special milestone by indulging in some bubbles.

I understand that there is a paid carpark in the side street, or feel free to join me in walking to Rydges.