



## 'For those women from the past, I thank you wholeheartedly for your efforts'

Even though it is 2010, a survey released in time for today's International Women's Day has found 92 per cent of Australian women still believe they do not enjoy equal rights.

IWD is a global day celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future.

Before now I didn't know much about IWD and nor did I care. It was yet another random day that had managed to find its way on to the calendar that we skim over.

I couldn't help but notice there was not an International Men's Day. My husband works harder than most people I know and if I get a special day, shouldn't he? I mean, wouldn't that be equal?

I was not alone.

Cindy Bosley, a mum from Perth now living in the US, told *mX* she would only be interested in the day "if it warrants women receiving chocolate, jewellery and flowers".

A lot of the hard work fighting for equal women's rights had already taken place in previous generations and was continuing throughout my childhood, perhaps so I could have the rather complacent don't-really-care-about IWD attitude I have as an adult.

I wonder if the women of Gen Y have the same attitude as my Gen X self?

For those women from the past I thank you wholeheartedly for your efforts and I apologise I don't take this day more seriously – without your efforts and sacrifices I would not be able to be a career woman, now a working mother, and I wouldn't have the privilege of having the attitude towards today that I have.

That said, I was surprised to see the study, conducted by cosmetic company Heat Group and the United Nations

Development Fund for women, (UNIFEM Australia), also found that 69 per cent of the more than 500 women polled nationally said they wanted more measures to improve the current situation of women in Australia – proving that despite progress being made gender equality in Australia still had a long way to go.

Admittedly, it would have been nice to have received a full-time pay cheque to stay home and raise our daughter instead of having to place her into daycare and return to work, or it would have been nice to have at least received maternity leave pay for longer.

The survey revealed 41 per cent of women found domestic commitments and the resulting inability to work longer hours to promote themselves professionally as the major stumbling blocks to gender equality in Australia.

Heat Group managing director Gillian Franklin said programs such as the Paid Parental Leave scheme could help some women who would like to return to work.

"However, it also highlights other issues such as access to flexible hours, the wage gap and access to affordable child care are still key issues for women," she said.

But I still have to say that here in Australia, we are, overall, pretty lucky. In lesser developed nations women are still dying in childbirth and millions of girls are still not permitted to go to school.

So it turns out although women's rights have come a long way over the decades there is still more to overcome.

■ **Jodie Munro O'Brien is an *mX* reporter who believes equality cuts both ways.**