



Speech by

**LINDA LAVARCH**

**STATE MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH**

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### **WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY 2004**

**Mrs LAVARCH** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (12.16 p.m.): It is hard to believe that 40-odd years ago, Rosalind Franklin, whose X-ray photos were a key to the discovery of DNA structure, was not even considered to be part of the team that won the 1962 Nobel Prize. What is even further hard to believe is that, although she was a very talented scientist and a pioneer in molecular biology, she was treated like a laboratory assistant, isolated from the scientific team, and not even allowed to eat in the university dining room, as was the norm for women in universities at that time.

Thankfully, we have come a long way in the last 40 years, but there is still a long way to go. That is why in my new role as parliamentary secretary to the Minister for State Development and Innovation, the Hon. Tony McGrady, I was delighted to launch the Women in Technology 2004 Pathways to Technology project. This project involved a workshop designed to increase the interest of young women in careers in science, engineering and information and communication technology. This workshop was staged by Women in Technology—known as WIT—which is a group of dedicated women who work in science, engineering and IT, who volunteer their time to support women engaged in the technology sector and who also promote the sector as a career choice for women.

The workshop was well attended by young people from years 9 to 12 from many high schools in south-east Queensland. Through their workshops, WIT has succeeded in making sure that young women throughout Queensland are aware of the excellent opportunities and the diversity of pathways available to them in technology industries. They have been offering great programs for women in the past seven years and the Pathways to Technology project is no exception. The Beattie government is a big supporter of WIT. For example, in four rounds of i-StAR funding, we have provided them with more than \$120,000 to stage programs for women, including regional programs for pathways to technology.

The Beattie government is also a big believer in equal opportunities for women in the Smart State, and we are actively encouraging women to expand their career choices. By encouraging young women into technology careers, we are working to address the statistical gender imbalance that these industries generally suffer. In fact, recent figures show that women make up an average of only 35 per cent of full-time positions across ICT industries—perhaps not unlike women in politics. According to the *Women in the Smart State Directions Statement 2003-2008*, women represent only 20 per cent of Queensland computing professionals, 36 per cent of professionals in natural and physical sciences and only seven per cent of building and engineering professionals. There is no reason for these low numbers. There is no reason women should not be better represented in these professions.

The Pathways to Technology workshop represented only one part of the government's overarching strategy to attract more young people into science and technology careers. In the strategy to encourage more young people into science and technology careers we are targeting many different age groups through many different programs. For example, the Science on Saturday program gives six- to 14-year-olds throughout Queensland the chance to do hands-on science experiments in a fun way. Also, by 2005 we aim to have a Science in Society elective subject for senior school students that will provide relative learning experiences about science and its real-world application for students who do not wish to study a specific science subject. We are also supporting initiatives run by other organisations, such as QUT's first Bachelor of Biotechnology Innovation degree that has congratulated its first graduates.

The Beattie government is also working hard to ensure that there are plenty of jobs in the science and technology sector. For example, in the science biotechnology area we are putting a lot of money into setting up world-class institutes such as the Institute for Molecular Bioscience, the Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology and the Australian Brain Research Institute. It is anticipated that these centres will provide up to 1,000 jobs for scientists. According to our Chief Scientist, Professor Peter Andrews, there will be 7,500 biotechnology jobs up for grabs by 2010. In the area of ICT we are putting our money into backing key areas of expertise and new areas of research.

Time expired.