



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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CENTENARY OF WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (4.12 pm): I would like to say how much I enjoyed the contribution of the honourable member for Aspley. I am most pleased to support this motion—and it is an exceptional story; that of women in Queensland politics. To look around the chamber and see the representation of women and to look around the departments and see the representation of women, one cannot help being amazed and thankful to the range of campaigners who have campaigned for women's rights over more than a century.

I want to name a few in the early stages, if I may. There were women like Emma Miller—no doubt one of the role models for women in this House, particularly those on the other side of the chamber, for her work in encouraging women to join the Australian Workers Union. She had a strong sense of social justice and worked vigorously for what she saw was a fair system of voting that allowed women to vote on a par with men. Her vision was very similar to what has actually come about today in the form of voting that we currently have in Queensland.

Of course, there were others who, like much of the push for female recognition, came from differing points of view and sought slightly different outcomes. In saying this, though, all women were bound together by the fact that they were fighting to raise the level or station of women in society. There was also Leontine Cooper, who fought for women's rights for decades, as the editor of the only women's suffrage newspaper in the state, the *Star*. While she unfortunately died two years before she would have been able to complete her long-awaited journey to the ballot box, her work is well respected. While she was not as radical as Miller, only asking for women's rights to be based on property and not an equal vote system, her work was rewarded. Then there were other women like the founders in 1903 of the Queensland Women's Electoral League, Margaret Ogg, and the Lady Mayoress in 1903, Leslie Corrie. Their work on empowering women to vote in Queensland will go down in the annals of history. Members should remember that all of these women were fighting for things that were not considered the status quo by any stretch of the imagination, and it was not only their perseverance but also their vision that raises them up as pioneers of this state.

I am sure they would be very pleased to see the work that the women in this parliament are doing. There is no longer a feeling of male and female in this place; rather, people are seen for their ability and views, and if nothing else that is what the aforementioned women fought for. I also mention that the Liberal Party has been a long-time supporter of women in this place, with the first female leader of a political party in this state being Joan Sheldon. I clearly remember only a year ago when I was first elected one of my most vivid memories of induction week was being with the other 11 members at a lunch in the Speaker's Dining Room and sitting next to the Hon. Joan Sheldon, the former member for Caloundra. I felt like I was sitting with the headmistress because I did not know her at all. I was asking deep questions like, 'What were your great achievements?' or something like that, and she said 'Apart from being Deputy Premier and Treasurer, I am pleased that I achieved more female rest rooms in this precinct and also at the cultural centre.' She was obviously very proud of the things she achieved but also had a great sense of humour.

That is something that we are all very thankful for. She was quite serious about that issue. When she came into this place, there were no provisions for female rest rooms just outside the chamber and things

had to be changed to accommodate that. So often we take those little things for granted. That underlines the gender neutral attitude of this place that marks the fruition of the struggle of many women over the past 150 years.

I look forward to International Women's Day on 8 March and will be taking part in those festivities in whatever way I can. I also remind members of the free resources on offer from the Office for Women, and I encourage them to display them at the appropriate forums. I wholeheartedly support this motion and urge other members to do likewise.