



Speech by

Karen Struthers

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Hansard Thursday, 8 March 2007

MOTION: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (12.00 pm): Let all the women of Queensland know that the opposition does not support this motion to protect the rights of working women. International Women's Day 2007 gives us much to celebrate, and it also provides an opportunity to acknowledge—contrary to the claims of opposition members—that there are many challenges ahead for women.

One of those challenges is to maintain the gains in pay equity and decent working conditions that women have fought hard for. It is shameful that the Howard federal government is undermining working conditions for women under the WorkChoices laws. Under Howard's regime of Australian Workplace Agreements, pay equity for women is declining from around 85 per cent of men's wages to 79 per cent. Employment security is also being eroded under the mean-spirited Howard industrial relations laws. All women need to know that John Howard has given employers much greater power to sack employees unfairly.

I say bring on the federal election because it is only a Labor government that will protect the working rights of women. Only a federal Labor government will restore pay equity and help women nationally to better balance work and family responsibilities. Kevin Rudd cares about working women. Kevin cares about the need for all families that are struggling to meet their responsibilities to their employers and the needs of their families.

On International Women's Day, another challenge is the need to have more women in leadership roles in public life. It is particularly encouraging that we now have more women than ever taking up our rightful places in parliaments and local governments around the nation. The Queensland parliament can boast 33 per cent of women members, thanks to strong representation by Labor women in this House.

Today I put out a call for members of both sides of the House to make every effort possible to recruit, preselect and support Indigenous women into this House. Other states and territories have elected Indigenous women to their parliaments, but in Queensland we have never had an Indigenous woman take her rightful place in the parliament. On International Women's Day 2007, let us make the effort. We have wonderfully skilled and courageous Indigenous women who work in all sorts of areas throughout the state. Let us support them. Let us see an Indigenous woman elected into this parliament within the next few election cycles. Go girls!