



Speech by

Lillian van Litsenburg

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Hansard Thursday, 8 March 2007

MOTION: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms van LITSENBURG (Redcliffe—ALP) (12.34 pm): International Women's Day celebrates not only the achievements of women but also the battle women have had to achieve the lifestyle and freedoms that women in Australia enjoy today. Our hearts especially go out to women around the world who do not have these freedoms we enjoy today and who are just beginning this same battle in their own lands and our sisters who are living under war conditions and are exposed to atrocities and living standards well below what are experienced by developing countries. We had a moving example of this with the visit of an Afghani MP who described the difficulties she faces every day.

I honour all of those women in Australia and around the world who have blazed the trail which we women are free to traverse today, not only in this parliament but also throughout Australia. But we cannot afford to take this freedom for granted. The Howard government has systematically worked to destroy these freedoms. Access to quality and affordable child care is essential for women in the workforce. Today 60 per cent of Queensland women are in the paid workforce and 33.9 per cent of small business operators are women; 36 per cent of Australian defence personnel are women; 20 per cent of Queensland's Senior Executive Service Public Service positions are held by women. I could go on with these achievements despite the difficulties they have had over child care.

I call on the federal government to start working with women. They are, after all, half of the Queensland population and half of Queensland voters. From the day the Howard government was elected the price of child care has risen steeply so that many women are paying in excess of half of their income to ensure their children are safely cared for. Others have had to leave the workforce. In fact, during the term of the Howard government many women, for the first time in many years, are finding themselves sacked when they become pregnant. The Howard government has continued to erode the quality of child care the average family can afford. But, to add insult to injury, it is now forcing mothers back into the workforce with its policy of removing parenting payments after their youngest child turns seven. We need to remain vigilant and express our anger at the actions of the Howard government. I call for the women of Australia to use this year's election to express their disapproval.

I am pleased that the Labor candidate for the electorate of Petrie, Yvette D'Ath, has a strong background in advocacy and stands up strongly for women. I am proud to belong to a party that affirms women and celebrates their achievements.