




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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ADJOURNMENT

International Women's Day; National Volunteer Week

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.30 pm): I would like to encourage all members of the House to join in the celebrations for International Women's Day on 8 March 2014. This year, the Queensland theme for International Women's Day is 'opportunity is knocking'. This iconic day highlights and recognises the achievements of women and their contributions to our communities. I would certainly like to say that my wife and two daughters make great contributions to their community in many ways, as I am sure do everybody's daughters, mums and wives.

As part of the celebration of International Women's Day, nominations were called from each electorate for the Queensland Inspiring Women—Speaker's Award. This award publicly recognises and honours women who give of themselves in service to their community and to others. The theme of this year's event is 'Women of generosity'. I had the great honour in nominating Mrs Lorraine Lovell from Newtown to represent the electorate of Toowoomba North. Let me tell members that Lorraine is a truly inspirational woman. Lorraine has recently retired after 30 years of volunteering at Lifeline Darling Downs and south-west Queensland. Lorraine started out as a rag cutter, progressed to clothing sorter and then became a shop manager. Her qualities are many, but she is dearly loved by her fellow staff members, other volunteers and customers.

While speaking about volunteers, I ask members to think about the contribution that they make to our communities. Every year across Queensland up to 1.2 million volunteers make a difference and enrich the lives of thousands of people they meet and help. This year, National Volunteer Week will be from 12 May to 18 May. It is the largest celebration of volunteers in Australia and it is a great opportunity for everybody to say thank you to volunteers. Volunteers add billions to our economy each year and contribute to strengthening the resilience of our communities. But even more importantly, they make Queensland a better place to live.

The Toowoomba North electorate is fortunate to have many volunteers who are secretly working quietly behind the scenes in many areas making our society healthier and better. Recently, the LNP state council meeting was held at the Empire Theatre in Toowoomba, which is a beautiful old theatre. The theatre was heavily manned by the Friends of the Empire, which is group of up to 250 volunteers who contribute to the catering, ushering and floral arrangements at the theatre, generally making it a great place to visit. Some of these volunteers—but there are many—were Mary Dunn, Irene Russell, Leonie Cusack and Margaret McKenzie. They all worked tirelessly across the weekend to ensure the conference went well. They do that on many weekends and many evenings.

Mr Shorten: They did a great job.

Mr WATTS: They did a great job. I thank the member for the interjection. I say well done to all of those ladies who volunteered and certainly well done to everybody who volunteers in my electorate.