



Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2015

MOTION: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (4.48 pm): I rise to support the motion that recognises the valuable contribution that rural women in Queensland are making socially and economically during this time of extreme drought across so many parts of the state.

I would like to thank the member for Nanango for putting forward this motion. I welcome the opportunity to inform the House of the challenges that women are facing during this dreadful drought, and I am pleased to be able to honour rural women and talk about a day in the life of a rural woman. I find it disappointing that there have been things like the draconian vegetation management laws of previous Labor state governments and the closure of the live cattle export trade which have seriously impacted on the profitability of primary producers across rural and regional Queensland. This reduced profitability means that rural businesses cannot afford staff, and it is the rural women who are stepping into these roles to support their husbands, the businesses and their families' future. Women across the state are taking on many extra responsibilities and doing a very good job of it. They might be the financial and account manager, the home education tutor, the school bus driver, the station hand, the tractor driver, the helicopter pilot, the Briggs & Stratton consultant—

An honourable member interjected.

Ms LEAHY: I take that interjection from the member. That has frustrated many women and many men, I can tell you—to name a few of the extra roles, whilst all the time being a mother, a carer and a loving wife. These are truly amazing women who juggle these roles on a daily basis whilst all the time coping with a drought that has no end date. Some properties are destocked due to drought and grazing pressures from kangaroos or stock might be away on agistment, causing further significant financial pressure.

So what is a day in the life of a rural woman like? I will attempt to give a general outline of some of the tasks with which they are faced. They are up before dawn and organise breakfast and the lunches. They run the dogs and feed and check the other animals. They drive the children to school over a dirt road to meet the school bus. They return to the house, they run the waters, they check the troughs and they implement their Briggs & Stratton consultancy skills. They return to the house and they check the phone messages and emails. They travel to town over that dirt road again to attend a meeting with the bank manager. They pick up the children. Then they will attend another meeting of local land holders about fencing initiatives and grazing pressures. They drive home over that dirt road again, hopefully before dark. They dodge the kangaroos and the other pests, living and dead. They arrive home to organise the children, check on the animals, cook dinner and supervise the homework. If they are lucky, maybe at about 10 o'clock at night they might get to make their way to bed. And if a rural women is lucky her husband might be in that bed with her, as he is often out sleeping in a swag caring for the stock who might be away on agistment. Or he might be out there chasing down the menacing wild dogs that are causing trouble across inland and regional Queensland.

It is for all of these reasons that I ask this parliament to recognise the valuable contribution that the rural women of Queensland are making socially and economically during this time of extreme drought, and I ask that this parliament honour them accordingly by supporting this motion.