



Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2015

MOTION: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN



Mrs FRECKLINGTON (Nanango—LNP) (4.29 pm): I move—

That this House recognises today as International Day of the Rural Woman and recognises the invaluable role the rural women of Queensland are playing socially and economically during this time of extreme drought.

I am proud to ask for this recognition for this important day, as I stand here very honoured and humbled to be representing the rural and regional women of Queensland. As I have said in this House before, I am extremely proud that I am the first female in Queensland to represent the agricultural industry from the government or the opposition. It is also an honour to work on behalf of all of our primary producers, but today on the International Day of Rural Women I would like to focus on the contribution of women to the agricultural sector.

The UN notes that rural women make up one-quarter of the entire world's population. They represent 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force and are also primarily responsible for the production, process and preparation of food that is available—therefore, giving them primary responsibility for food security. At the same time, it is important to remember that some 76 per cent of the world's extreme poor live in rural or regional areas.

The first International Day of Rural Women was observed on 15 October 2008. It is about empowering and activating women in our rural communities so they can help decrease world hunger and rural poverty both globally and here in Australia. In our country, about one-third of Australians reside outside of our capital cities and agricultural commodities alone are responsible for 12 per cent of Australia's GDP. They grow 90 per cent of our locally consumed food and fibre and they have much to be proud of—and Australia has much to be grateful to them for.

From a Queensland perspective, many of Queensland's primary producers, particularly those in Western Queensland, are facing significant challenges with the historic drought conditions. I touched on this matter yesterday right here in this House when I talked about the extreme drought conditions that we have had. The women of our farming families deserve our attention today because they are the ones stoically supporting their husbands while trying to keep the family unit together and functional through these tough times.

Just this morning, I made a call to a very good friend of mine, Anna, who runs a small business in the township of Aramac. She said to me that her town is losing people, that there are hardly any sheep left on the surrounding properties and that, therefore, shearers are moving down south to try to find work. She had two women in her shop who had just dropped their kids at school and she put them on the phone to me. It was wonderful to be able to talk to these two wonderful women, but it was extremely distressing at the same time.

Tracy, a primary producer from out of town, said that every night her husband is unable to sleep. She is always worried about how she can pay the bills and how she will keep feeding her family.

Yesterday her husband had to shoot another six of their cows and they are now down to a third of their stock. This morning she was standing in Aramac waiting on a \$15,000 load of cotton seed so they could try to continue to feed their stock but that it will only last them for another six weeks. She said that she is one of the lucky ones.

Then she put Liz on the phone. Liz is from another property, and she is an amazing, stoic woman. She said that every second day she goes out to one of their places and feeds, while David, her husband, feeds every other day on the other place. She said that the hardest thing for her is having to keep her children well and happy through this because they see the damage this drought is doing. I would like to say thank you to these amazing rural women. Thank you for sharing your stories with me so I could highlight them here in this House for all members. Queensland's rural women are truly courageous—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Member for Nanango, your time has expired.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have two seconds left. Could I please have the indulgence of the House?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Two seconds.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I ask for your support in the Queensland parliament as we officially recognise the International Day of Rural Women.

(Time expired)