




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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MOTION: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (4.39 pm): I rise to support this motion and acknowledge the shadow minister for agriculture, Deb Frecklington, for moving it. The member is a great example of the quality of rural women we have in regional Queensland: a wife, a mum, from the land, a professional career in law before politics, a fantastic advocate for regional and rural Queensland and the first woman to hold the position of shadow agricultural minister. I would also like to acknowledge the shadow minister for communities, child safety and disability services, Tracy Davis, who last term was the minister and played a tremendous effort in rolling out much needed funds to help establish counselling for the drought. Of course, I cannot forget the member for Warrego, Ann Leahy, who joined this parliament with me, a fantastic advocate for agriculture. She has been involved in agriculture for a very long time and advocates not only for Warrego, but for the whole of Queensland.

The first year of the International Day of Rural Women was held in 2008. It seems astonishingly recent, especially to an Australian, because rural women play such a vital role in our country and its story. This day was established in order to recognise 'the critical role and contribution of rural women, including Indigenous women, in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty'.

In speaking to this motion, I wish to pay tribute to the rural women of Queensland, particularly to the fantastic rural women in my seat of Gregory. My predecessor the member for Gregory spoke frequently in this House on this topic. I think Vaughan felt we men would still be living in tents without the force of women in our lives. They make a massive contribution to the west. Through drought and flood it is the women who know the way to reach out and sustain their communities. These are particularly tough times in Gregory with a fierce drought and the collapse in the mining economy. I can tell members it is a bitter time, a time when many feel despair and exhaustion. Our rural women are playing their part with courage. Sometimes that courage means hours of dreary and repetitive work to feed stock and check bores and windmills and then find the strength to wrestle the kids through their school day and still produce the comfort of a family meal for everyone at the end. Many times it means stepping to the front with courage and optimism to lead the way for her family or, indeed, her entire community.

When gathering my thoughts to speak on this motion, I started to list the names of all the outstanding women I know who play the leader's role and make a difference in many different areas in the life of Gregory. I quickly realised that if I tried to name them, my tribute would be more like a rollcall. So instead let me describe the areas of accomplishment, as in Gregory we know who they are as individuals.

Firstly, I wish to pay tribute to the women who drive agriculture at every level. Our agripoliticians, agriscientists, economists, agronomists, agricultural educators and, most of all, our female farmers and

graziers who provide a vital economic platform for the west and for Queensland. I pay tribute to our women in government, especially local government where women are established as a driving force for our rural communities, helping their townships adapt, survive and achieve so that everyone's lives are better. I praise the women who sustain the rural health system: the doctors, the nurses and the allied health professionals. I also praise the women who make the work possible as administrators, cleaners and cooks, running our hospitals and our clinics. I earnestly thank the women who serve as our first responders in the ambulance and Police Service of the west. I thank the many female volunteers in the rural fireys and the SES.

I pay tribute to our women in small business and trades, the backbone of our economy across all towns in regional and rural Queensland who provide the necessities and luxuries of life to their communities and many sponsorships to local causes. I admire the accomplishment of our women in journalism for their intelligence, compassion and dedication to rural communities. I pay tribute to the rural women who drive education in Gregory, from the universities and TAFEs, through the high schools and primary schools, to our community kindergartens and child care. Without them, life would be impossible; we could not provide the opportunities for our children despite the issue of distance.

I also praise their partners in this: the mothers who form the P&C and run the tuckshops and fundraise for school camps and band instruments. I especially salute the amazing women of the Isolated Children's Parents Association. They are a really amazing group. I thank the many women who have driven community development and resilience, whether it has been through their paid or elected employment or whether it is just through their mighty organisations such as the QCWA, Rotary, Zonta and Lions.

Rural women are inspirational and never more so than when the chips are down. I say to the rural women of Queensland and to the great women of Gregory: the House salutes you.