




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 13 September 2016

ADJOURNMENT

Warrego Electorate, Rotary Clubs and Freemasons

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (7.03 pm): I rise to pay tribute to the Rotary Club membership of Charleville, Mitchell, St George and Roma and the Queensland Freemasons, who have become the unsung heroes of the ongoing drought with their drought relief voucher system. The drought relief voucher system has been delivered by Rotary clubs around the district for over three years. I would like to thank particularly Phillip Charles, past DG, Gerry Bahre, Adrian Utschink, Bryan Payne, Paul Anderson, Patrice Robinson, Gary Birkett and all the Rotarians for their dedication to this cause.

Hand Heart Pocket, the charity of the Queensland Freemasons, joined forces with the Rotary Club of Charleville to provide grassroots support to landholders and business owners who are battling against the ongoing drought conditions. The drought is not only impacting landholders; it is impacting small businesses in towns and whole communities. I am very honoured to place on record the funds that Hand Heart Pocket has donated to drought relief. They have donated more than \$710,000. This is over and above the significant funds donated by the Rotary clubs.

The members of the Augathella Masonic Lodge, who were also members of the Charleville Rotary Club, decided to merge the two initiatives, using funds raised through Hand Heart Pocket to provide local business vouchers through the Rotary Club. I would like to thank Ric Newson and his Charleville Rotary team, even though they are a small team, and Dave Walters and the Queensland Freemasons for their tremendous support of farmers and small businesses across South-West Queensland.

The area assisted by Rotary and the Freemasons encompasses the local government areas of Paroo, Bulloo, Murweh and Quilpie, representing 14 per cent of Queensland. The other Rotary clubs assist the St George, Mitchell and Roma districts. The voucher system was designed to help local businesses as well as individuals and families.

The system works well and ensures that no funds are diverted to administration costs. Every cent donated to drought assistance goes to drought assistance. Confidentiality is paramount in the distribution of the vouchers through a range of local businesses—for instance, the local tyre service, chemist, fuel or food store to name a few.

Part of the Freemason tradition is charity—providing a hand up, not a handout, to people in need. Rotary shares the same principles. I place on record tonight a huge thank you to the Rotary members and the Freemasons for the hand up they are giving and continue to give to the farmers and small businesses in the Warrego electorate.