




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Women, Agriculture Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (9.44 am): This week we celebrate International Women's Day. The theme of this year is 'Inspire inclusion', emphasising the importance of diversity and empowerment in all aspects of society. On 8 March each year we pause to acknowledge the incredible achievements of women across the globe. This year I would like to recognise the tenacious, creative and innovative women who work in agriculture. Whether it is breeding beef, growing bananas or beans or farming capers, cotton, camels or crocodiles, Queensland women are leading the way. Historically, the contribution of women in the agriculture sector was not recognised and was often underpaid. Times are changing.

Queensland's primary industry commodities are forecast at \$23.67 billion for 2023-24—the second highest on record. Queensland exports contributed over \$12.49 billion worth of agriculture and food products to the Queensland economy in 2022-23. Women are estimated to represent over 30 per cent of the workforce in agriculture in Queensland.

Within my Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, women hold several senior positions including Bernadette Ditchfield PSM, Acting Director-General and Deputy Director-General of Agriculture; and Rachel Chay, Chief Biosecurity Officer, not to mention Dr Allison Crook, who is Queensland's Chief Veterinary Officer and was recently honoured with the Public Service Medal in the 2024 Australia Day awards. Dr Crook was recognised for outstanding Public Service during COVID-19 to animal welfare and the protection of biosecurity in Queensland. Over 44 per cent of the department's workforce are women. This is an increase of over six per cent since 2015.

Hardworking women are also leading our peak industry bodies—women like Jo Sheppard, who is the Chief Executive Officer and board member of the Queensland Farmers' Federation; grazier and farmer Georgie Somerset, the General President of AgForce in Queensland, who is a strong advocate for rural Queensland and the agricultural industry. Last night at the International Women's Day event I was privileged to join Kay Tommerup, Vice-President of the Queensland Farmers' Federation, and Jo Martin, State Secretary of the Queensland Beekeepers' Association.

Tonight there will be a celebration of the prelude to Beef 2024. In 2021 at the Beef Australia event, the Ladies Lunch, we heard from the four Penfold sisters of Four Daughters beef—Bonnie, Molly, Jemima and Matilda—from Condamine who grew their brand after a fateful meeting during Beef 2018. This May remember to be in Rockhampton for Beef 2024. I am extremely proud of the contribution women make to agriculture in Queensland.