

RURAL REGIONAL AND REMOTE WOMEN'S NETWORK FORUM

Statement by Member for Central Wheatbelt

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Nationals WA) [12.55 pm]: I rise today to congratulate the Rural Regional and Remote Women's Network for the forum held yesterday in Perth, bringing together three speakers to discuss sexual assault and harassment in our workplaces. The keynote speakers, journalist Tracey Spicer; academic Dr Skye Saunders; and former Rural Woman of the Year Catherine Marriott, provided the audience with compelling reasons why it is everyone's business to talk about how to make our workplaces safer. Dr Saunders has conducted research that indicates 73 per cent of women from rural, regional or remote Australia have experienced sexual harassment or assault at some time in their life. In the agricultural sector, her research indicates this figure rises to 92 per cent. The #USToo movement is not about blame; it is not about hate; and it is not about pointing fingers. It is about acknowledging there is a problem and working on pragmatic solutions to make positive changes. As the leader of a party that represents regional Western Australians, this is important to me. It is important to my colleagues. I was pleased to be joined by my colleagues Hon Jacqui Boydell, MLC, Terry Redman, MLA and Hon Colin DeGrussa, MLC, along with representatives of our party's organisation at the lunch. I would like to note the great courage and integrity of Ms Catherine Marriott. Yesterday she publicly shared some of her most personal and challenging moments, including a journal entry from the time before she came forward to make a formal complaint to the Nationals. We all need to work harder to make sure no woman, or man, has to experience the pain and angst that she communicated to the audience yesterday. I urge all members of this place to listen, to learn and to act. Yesterday's forum was a powerful moment for rural, regional and remote women. I congratulate the RRR Network for highlighting this most important issue.