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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

International Day of the Girl Child

SPEECH

Monday, 20 October 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Elliot, Justine, MP

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Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (10:36): I rise to note that Saturday, 11 October was the International Day of the Girl Child. In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly declared October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child. The day is designated to recognise girls' rights and the unique problems that girls face around the world. As we know, too many girls face discrimination and a variety of issues and challenges throughout the world and particularly in many developing countries; issues around violence, forced marriage, poverty and inadequate access to education. So many young women and girls experience these issues at the moment. It is a sad fact that more 60 million girls around the world are not in school, and over 100 million girls are predicted to become child brides over the next decade. Seventy per cent of the world's poorest people are females.

The International Day of the Girl Child seeks to focus attention on the need to address the challenges girls face and to promote the empowerment of girls and the fulfilment of their human rights. Right across the world the International Day of the Girl Child was acknowledged in many organisations and community events. One of these events is called Days for Girls. Days for Girls International is a grassroots non-profit organisation whose goals are to create a more dignified, humane and sustainable world for girls through advocacy, health awareness and education. Days for Girls International helps girls gain awareness and provides access to quality, sustainable feminine hygiene products, and also arranges the direct distribution of the kits, by partnering with non-profits, groups and organisations, and by raising awareness and helping communities around the world to start their own programs.

One such community that participated in this program was in the town of Murwillumbah in my electorate of Richmond. I was very proud to attend the local Days for Girls event at the Murwillumbah Community Centre and had the pleasure of officially opening the proceedings. About 80 people attended, and 45 kits were completed on the day, and the group is well on their way to achieving their goal of having 100 ready to send to Kenya and Nepal by the end of November. With these kits, girls in the developing world will have an opportunity to go to school, get an education and take part in society in ways that they could not before, due to lack of access to products like this.

Simply put, this initiative means that girls do not have to go days without school, days without income and days without leaving the house because they do not have access to these products. As it says on the Days for Girls International website:

It turns out this issue is a surprising but instrumental key to social change for women all over the world. The poverty cycle can be broken when girls stay in school.

This is a fantastic global and local initiative, and I want to pay tribute to everyone who came along on the day to assist. I especially acknowledge the outstanding work of the Rotary Club of Mt Warning AM Murwillumbah for driving this project locally and organising this local Days for Girls event, which was part of the worldwide sewathon, which was held on October 11. To have so many people participating on the day was fantastic. People just turned up with their sewing machines, and away they went. They started making the kits. I commend this global initiative and I congratulate the Murwillumbah community for coming together to celebrate and highlight the issues around the International Day of the Girl Child.