



**International Women's Day  
8 March 2007**

**Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders):** Today (8 March) is International Women's Day, and I quote an article by Victoria Clark on feminism and politics, as follows:

On March 8 the world will be celebrating International Women's Day, originally the day to fight for women's rights in the workplace or in political life. This past year may place a different twist on the celebrations as 2006-2007 has provided concrete demonstrations that women are now accepted in so many areas of what used to be a man's world. One could argue we are slowly and surely creating the balance of yin and yang.

She goes on to say, however, that 'most women in leadership roles were not the primary carers to their children... or they had eschewed the role of motherhood', and concludes:

Given that feminism was originally a movement designed to emancipate women and enable them to be able to participate as wives, mothers and workers in the running of the state, we can only hope that in the future the women who increasingly will represent us will be able to illustrate all sides of their femininity openly and with all the support structures we can deliver.

I am very proudly a wife and a mother and an elected member of the state parliament, and I want to comment particularly now on the role of the media as one of those support structures. There is much more to being a member of parliament than giving a performance for the media during question time, when the cameras are focused to record the theatrics, aggression and controversy that sells the next day's papers or that evening's TV and radio news. We do not work for just three days per sitting and go on holiday when the parliament is not sitting, as stated by Greg Kelton in *The Advertiser* in recent months. As well as the very long sitting days that include committees, briefings, delegations, meetings and parliamentary duties, many of us are also fulfilling the difficult and time-consuming duties and responsibilities of being accessible local members and global citizens.

My background as a woman brought up on a farm on remote Eyre Peninsula and trained to be responsible, self-reliant and a problem solver prevents me from being an aggressive, theatrical, controversial and competitive politician, as is both praised and denigrated by the media. With 55 000 square kilometres of electorate and 22 000 voters, most issues that are debated in parliament affect us. This often occurs in ways unforeseen by city-based drafters and implementers, hence the need for me to attend most briefings where issues are discussed.

My speeches and submissions, which appear in *Hansard* or on my website, propose some solutions to our world's and the electorate's many issues. However, they are rarely accessed or quoted by city media. In the *Hansard* or on my website one can find mention of uranium and thorium, sea water, desalination and pipelines, railways and airlines, wind energy, graphite blocks, etc. While I spend hours researching these topics in the hope of improving our communities, the radio, television and newspapers are full of Media Mike's wedding, Sandra Kanck's ecstasy, Nick Xenophon's latest stunts, Pat Conlon's second baby or, more recently, the bad behaviour of certain members of parliament.

I have been involved in two major initiatives in the past few months about which I am very excited, as they could have global implications for our future water supplies and reducing climate change. I have been working regularly for years with people from India, China, Taiwan and the Middle East who want minerals, seafood and technology from the wonderful region I represent. At the

other extreme, I have families in crisis as a result of the drought. I am continually fighting for social justice for my people. The last letter from my office in 2006 to a state minister was to protest the fact that, following the termination of appropriate services in Port Lincoln two years ago, rape victims from the region must still travel to Adelaide on public transport unwashed and without assistance to be examined and assessed. This is an issue of basic human rights.

The media should wake up and tell the people about the real issues with which their members of parliament are dealing. We are living in a fascinating world that we can affect for the benefit of ourselves and mankind. It is a privilege to be one of those who can influence the outcomes; however, we need the help and recognition of a media which is willing to do more than critique the most recent hour of question time theatre. In conclusion Victoria Clark's article states:

The election of Angela Merkel to the position of German Chancellor, the elevation of Nancy Pelosi to the third most powerful position in the US as Speaker of the House and the emergence of Segolene Royal as the possible candidate for the upcoming elections in France are a few illustrations revealing how women are as capable as men for even the most male-dominated industry—state leadership.