

# Rural women lighten loads

**Story: Peter and Bevy Hughes**

MORE than 100 women from many parts of the Burnett, west to Toowoomba and east to the Wide Bay area attended the second annual World Rural Women's Day at Wooroolin.

The event was organised by South Burnett Centacare and the Barambah Branch of the Queensland Rural Women's Network.

Durong grazier and QRWN president Georgie Somerset told the women the energy generated by so many caring women meant things could get done.

"Gatherings such as this bring together so many women from different walks and with vastly different experiences," she said. "Networking to make our voice heard makes a difference."

Ms Somerset said it was also mental health week and no one realises just how big a problem mental illness can be, than women. "Some in the hall with us today have had problems and talking to others is very helpful," she said.

"On many occasions the Black Dog seems to be nicely put away in its kennel, but every now and then it slips its collar and gets away."

Speakers for the day were women who have taken risks

and developed businesses, while the theme was to try to help rural women in third world countries.

Tina McPherson, Tina Berrys of Bundaberg, told of her and her husband's many and diverse experiences dairying in New Zealand, living and working in Uruguay and Indonesia before coming to Bundaberg and purchasing a cane farm.

"We didn't grow cane but decided on strawberries - you should be passionate about what you do and I was passionate about strawberries, especially eating them."

Ms McPherson said that the Tina Berry brand has spread the rural production story, with a focus on sustainability, and increased many school children's knowledge of the farming process.

"During an award trip to Spain, that grows 10% of the world's strawberries, I was able to follow the trail from farm to consumer," she said.

"In spite of all their talk about sustainable production, the large retailers are purely price driven. The cheaper they can buy, the better they like it."

Ms McPherson said throughout the world women do 65% of rural work, grow 50% of the food but own only 1% of the property. Two-thirds of the illiterate are women.



**INSPIRATIONAL:** Ness Bambling, left, of Gayndah, chats with guest speaker Tina McPherson, of Tina Berrys, Bundaberg.

Contributed

## Fork in the road

FIFTEEN kilometres along the Gayndah Rd from Murgon is not the place you would expect to find a take-away or dine-in restaurant offering a superb range of local produce.

But Roberta Schablon brings extensive experience in the food and catering industry and she and her husband needed to get out of the city. She spoke about the trials and tribulations plus the vision.

"The Saucy Fork prides itself on sourcing almost all the food from within 160km," Ms Schablon said.

"The restaurant offers full silver service on a large veranda, with magnificent views."

The 160km range helps local producers and reduces the carbon footprint of the food.

Ms Schablon said there was potential for a local food production and distribution system.