

Speech by Mrs Gina Rinehart
Patron and Founder of National Agriculture & Related Industries Day
Executive Chairman of the Hancock Prospecting Group and S. Kidman & Co
National Agriculture & Related Industries Day Gala Dinner
Thursday 21 November 2019, Perth

Good evening distinguished guests and friends,

Welcome to Australia's third annual National Agriculture and Related Industries Day!

We really have a one off first on this special day – the 'Star Gina 2GR' ship, a rare pink ship, is now loading on its maiden voyage in our north. As you may know, 2GR is the name of the fullblood wagyu we are eating tonight.

Huge thanks to each and every one of our food sponsors, repeat sponsors and new sponsors – it is great to have you with us tonight. I am pleased to advise that our gala dinner sold out about a month ago, with many wanting to be with us here tonight – this has happened for every annual dinner now!

Thank you to Tony and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA, and the Kimberly Pilbara Cattlemen's Association who have been with me since I first approached the Federal Government for approval to establish a National Agriculture and Related Industries Day. These wonderful associations bravely stand up for agriculture and cattle.

And a warm welcome to those who've travelled from all across Australia to celebrate our important industry, including Nick Paspaley, Executive Chairman of Paspaley, who has again donated tonight's wonderful door prize, in addition to being a generous sponsor every year, Frank Pace, "Mr Eggs" as I call him, again, a generous sponsor every year, the incredible Aussie poet, Murray Hartin, and of course, the fantastic London Essentials, all the way from London, who the generous sponsors, and I should include our company in that, have helped to make their visit possible, by very popular request!

And thank you too and please join me in applause for all who work in our agricultural industry!

People ask me why I didn't call today just National Agriculture Day. Its National Agriculture and Related Industries day because agriculture doesn't just work in isolation, it supports many other related industries across our country.

We and the related industries are an industry that is not only of great importance to West Australia and Australia, and essential to our lives, but throughout our history has been part of the very best of our Australian culture.

Hard work, mateship, striving through adversity, not relying on handouts, common sense, practical, sensible, giving helping hands, trustworthy, responsible, striving to do the tasks at hand well, investors in our country, job providers, risk takers, and a larger pro rata percentage of whom make up our defence forces and Olympic teams. What fantastic qualities!

These are the qualities we usually find in the people who live and work in the bush, making it productive. Qualities shared over generations by the people who built our country, people I admire, we all can admire.

We have been the ones who have developed parts of Australia, in the most remote locations. The primary industries are the backbone of our nation, and have been throughout our history. We are an industry we can very rightly be proud of.

Remember that phrase many of us grew up with “living off the sheep’s back” which helped our living standards for decades. Yes we are a lucky country, lucky that we have abundant sunshine and water, but we will be unlucky if we don’t use it. As an industry we have brought investment, infrastructure, and some city conveniences to some of the most in need and remote places in this country. We support family’s right across this country.

Outside of mining how many other industries have done as much for our country or for as long as our agriculture and its related industries have done?

We, despite often tough conditions, are the nation’s second largest export earner with \$1 out of every \$8.6 export dollars coming from agricultural produce. It is our tax revenue that helps raise enough dollars to help pay for our roads, hospitals, nurses, police, defence forces, our elderly and more. Too often this is forgotten – it’s all about spend, rather than the hard work that goes into earning the revenue, before it can be spent!

It is up to us to ensure other Australians, especially those in the cities, better understand the importance of our industry and the industries that rely upon our industry, including the need for us to be internationally cost competitive so that we can retain our export markets that we need and grow these opportunities.

For our agricultural industry to continue to be a success, we must encourage our governments to lessen the huge costs they burden us with via government tape and taxation. Please keep speaking up for your industry.

It was great to see our Prime Minister in his recent address to the 2019 Queensland Resources Council Annual Lunch say:

Film of PM shows on screens:

“There are new threats to the future of the resources sector that have emerged. A new breed of radical activism is on the march. Apocalyptic in tone, brooks no compromise, all or nothing. Alternative views not permitted. A dogma that pits cities against regional Australia. One that cannot resist sneering at wealth-creating and job-creating industries, and the livelihoods particularly of regional Australians... Agriculture, mining, oil and gas production. Sectors that just happen to produce more than 70 per cent of our export income. Sectors that invariably rely on the industry and enterprise of blue-collar workers, as they would have been known... The vote on May 18 was an affirmation of an Australia where the contribution of rural and regional Australia and the great industries that it hosts... and of course agriculture and others, is respected and recognised. But despite the election result, we must be vigilant in responding to these new extreme versions, in all of its manifestations of environmentalism.”

Let's repeat often, that the agricultural and mining industries are the backbone of our country, it is the reason our small population is able to punch above its weight. Without these industries we would simply not have a place at the G20 meetings or have the standard of living we in the cities enjoy.

For Australia to prosper it needs investment to be encouraged with good economic policies. Importantly this includes less government tape and compliance burdens and lower government tax and costs. For those of you old enough to remember the Whitlam socialist government, and its investment deterring, anti-business policies, did you know, that back in Whitlam's days, we had less government approvals, permits, licences and compliance than we do today.

Is there any government buy Australia campaign that will induce our trading partners to purchase our product if it costs more than other competing nations, or if our supply is not reliable? Our international customers will buy our products if they remain cost competitive and reliable, without government intervention.

However, there are a growing number of those in government understanding and wanting to cut tape and tax, lets help, and let's show our support.

We are very delighted to have Nick Paspaley AC, Executive Chairman of Paspaley, who've been in agriculture, since Nick's dad came to west Australia 100 years ago, here with us tonight.

Nick may I ask, do you want to get advice from bureaucrats that have never successfully run cattle, fishing fleets or battled with droughts?

Nick, would you prefer to pay less tax and have less government advice and less government tape?

Everyone, please put up your hands if you would also prefer to pay less tax, less loans to pay high taxes and license fees, have less government advice and less government red tape?

Well that's pretty much everyone, so let's get this message to our governments.

Cutting government tape and taxes, works, just look at the USA and India where they have done exactly this on a federal level.

Our government representatives, who are usually not from a business background, need our help to understand that we cannot tax our way to prosperity, and hence they must be more financially responsible. Our government needs to spend less. It is being induced to spend more, often by those who don't want to contribute themselves economically.

Sitting around in the goat cheese, soy milk latte cafes and bars, are those in the cities, increasingly distancing themselves from those working hard in country areas, and increasingly raising their voices against dams and the very industry that enables them to have fresh produce from a clean air country. Around 50 percent haven't met a farmer or pastoralist in the last year, and around 75 percent, don't see the relevance for them, of an agricultural industry.

Earlier today I was in the Pilbara, and I co-opened via a filmed speech the Pastoralists and Graziers of WA Forum, and raised the idea that we should start on National Agriculture Day, a mini G20 for agriculture, and then issue points important to our industry from this forum.

Would a mini G20 for agriculture, be a timely idea?

Even if the drought breaks soon, which we all hope daily for, reducing the burden of each of the government's excessive taxes and even a tax rebate for a considerable chunk of the taxes we've paid these last four record drought years, particularly for small and medium producers, would help our industry rebuild after the drought, it would help us invest in improving our stocks welfare, safety and practical technology, as well as ever necessary maintenance.

One voice saying this, nothing will happen, why not try a mini G20 for agriculture forum?

The WA premier has announced that his government will cut payroll tax for small to medium businesses and stamp duty state-wide. As he said, this is to help kick start small to medium businesses, who provide a large segment of overall employment. It's not easy as premier to drive tax cuts, but let's encourage him to be on a positive effective roll here, and cut license fees too. Agriculture sure needs help to kick start after four years of massive drought.

Licence fees, payroll tax and stamp duties simply don't help one of West Australia's most important industries, or those who work in it. Or the many related industries who rely on our agricultural industry.

In the USA, under President Trump's strong economic leadership, where he kept his election promise to cut red-tape and taxes, investment is up, so is business and consumer confidence. And unemployment is down, in fact they have the lowest unemployment in more than 50 years! And even for disadvantaged people their unemployment is the lowest it's been in 20 years. And wages are up. The proof is there. Cutting tax and government-tape truly works. Indeed, last week the NASDAQ, Dow Jones and S&P 500 hit another record high!

So let's hurry up in bringing these tax and government tape cutting reforms to Australia. We need to do something to assist this, why not launch our mini G20 for agriculture?

We don't want more loans which we have to pay back, we want less tax, less licence fees, less red tape, so we don't need to go further into debt, and add more interest to our costs, even if delayed interest.

But what has our government done despite record drought, the most severe our nation has experienced, scarcely nothing. Well, kept making us pay taxes and licence fees, tied the water our stock desperately need in red tape, and offered us loans to in effect help us pay for costly government burdens, with interest payable at some stage.

We sure need a forum, and not just only this reason. Other reasons are on our website.

Last year we launched the 'Things We love' book with stories and recipes and more from each of Hancock and Kidman stations and Hancock 2GR farms from around Australia.

These recipes are loved recipes, recipes you can use too. And some of my favourite parts of the book are the true stories of those who live in our outback and farms as to why they love to do so. I know I used to love station life when I was younger, and continue to believe it's a good life for families and children.

This book is on sale tonight and the publishers have agreed to kindly donate a share of the proceeds to drought relief.

Now for an exciting part of the evening. This year we ran a competition for fuel and electricity saving ideas. Can I please call to the stage the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie and representatives from the following winning stations and farms: Durham Downs/Woomanooka, Tungali, Macumba, Brunchilly, Rockybank/Holyrood & Forestvale, Helen Springs, South Burnett, the Wagyu Team, Caigan/Glencoe, Willeroo Station, Phoenix Farm, the Adelaide office, Narilyco, Durrie, Glengyle and Liveringa.

Thank you for your outstanding contribution in 2019 towards saving fuel and energy costs and towards the use of solar. Indeed your outstanding contributions in entirety.

Before I finish, how could I finish without a quote from Sir Winston Churchill: quote "Dinner would have been splendid...if the wine had been as cold as the soup, the beef as rare as the service, the brandy as old as the fish, and the maid as willing as the Duchess!"

We look forward to making each year's agriculture day celebrations even better, and we'd love you to join us each year. Next November in Adelaide, then the year after in Queensland.

Please enjoy! This is your night! Please join me in welcoming Australia's much loved country poet, Murray Hartin, who has created a wonderful poem for you.