



Speech by

Mrs E. CUNNINGHAM

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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PARAPLEGIC BENEFIT FUND

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (8.47 p.m.): This week is Spinal Awareness Week. In our electorates, there are many people who have been affected by vehicle accidents, sporting accidents and so on. I commend to the House a group called the Paraplegic Benefit Fund. Dr Vernon Hill, the director of the Princess Alexandra Spinal Injuries Unit, is also a director of that fund. He has said—

"Traumatic spinal injury can occur to any of us at any time. It is generally possible within the first few week or so to gauge whether there is a chance of significant recovery. The financial problems faced by those left permanently paralysed can be devastating.

A prompt payout by PBF Australia is a Godsend! It helps cushion the transition from hospital back into the community.

The money provided by the Health and welfare system for equipment and housing alterations is never enough. PBF assists our funding."

I commend Dr Vernon Hill, who is one of the nicest fellows I have met. He has a real concern for the people under his care.

Money that is paid by the fund is in addition to any other compensation available and can be used in any way that a recipient chooses. Even if a subscriber or a family member of a subscriber never suffers a spinal injury, their membership will help PBF Australia to assist those who have. It is a non-profit organisation and it reinvests a large proportion of its membership fees back into the community.

PBF gains its funds predominantly from membership fees. There are a number of options available through subscription to single, double or family memberships. Importantly, the fund is looking for inroads into the larger State and Federal Government departments for the old ambulance-type subscription, that is, the payment of 50c or \$1 a week. People do not miss such sums from their pay, but that money helps greatly those people in our community who, unfortunately, meet with accidents for which they are never prepared—none of us ever are.

I commend the Paraplegic Benefit Fund to the House. The people who run the fund are well qualified. They are compassionate and they have an interest in providing services to all people who are affected by spinal injuries. The board is made up of the director of each State spinal unit—

Time expired.
