



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Jigsaw Queensland Incorporated; Mr B. Penny

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (10 a.m.), by leave: Jigsaw Queensland Incorporated is part of a nationwide network of Jigsaw organisations and was established in 1976. The organisation's work addresses the many issues relating to assisting persons involved in adoption, providing information, counselling and support for adopted persons, birth parents and adoptive parents. I would like today to express my thanks to all those at Jigsaw for their ongoing commitment to their work. I would also like to recognise the immense contribution of this and other community organisations in providing a level of support to the community which could not be provided by Government. The work of my department in the area of adoption is greatly enhanced by the work of Jigsaw.

I would like today in particular to acknowledge the special contribution of the immediate past President of Jigsaw, Mr Bradley James Penny. Brad Penny passed away on 1 February 1999 after a long illness. He was tragically only 33 years of age. Brad touched the lives of many people. He was known, loved and admired by many who knew him personally and also those who knew him in his capacity as a worker and later president of Jigsaw. Brad was adopted in October 1965. He had a happy and loving adoptive family and his deep affection for them was evident. The support of his family enabled Brad to start on his personal journey of reuniting with his family of origin. Brad's search for his birth family heightened his desire to assist other adopted persons to successfully reunite with their families, and this prompted him to begin his long association with the Jigsaw organisation, which commenced in the 1980s. He quickly embraced the work of the organisation with great enthusiasm. Brad had enormous energy, commitment and concern for people and from the outset worked tirelessly for those people involved in adoption.

Brad was elected president of Jigsaw in August 1992 and worked passionately towards enhancing that organisation's public profile and ensuring that, wherever possible, members experienced a successful reunion. The concern that Brad felt for the people with whom he came into contact through his work was evident in whatever he undertook. His enthusiasm about the issues that he dealt with in his life and work will be long remembered by all those who knew him.

In 1997, when funding for Jigsaw was withdrawn, Brad worked tirelessly until that funding was reinstated in July 1998. I am very pleased that this funding will assist Jigsaw to continue the good work it does in adoption that gives so much support and information to assist adopted persons and their relatives in their personal searches.

What we have learned from Brad's story is that it is possible for an adopted person to have a happy and loving adoptive family and still need to know about their original family. Brad's experience mirrored that of many adopted persons who seek their family origins and simply need to know. This need to know does not lessen their love for or their bonding with their adoptive family.

Regardless of one's personal views about the often contentious and emotionally charged issue of adoption, the personal commitment and contribution of Brad Penny is beyond dispute. Even as he struggled with illness at the end of his very short life, he maintained his association with Jigsaw.

I would like to express my gratitude to Brad for all that he achieved in his work for adopted persons and their families. I would like to acknowledge the presence of some of Brad's family and colleagues in the gallery today and to conclude by acknowledging that I feel very privileged to have known this young man.