



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 10 November 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Psst! Post School Survival Tips Booklet

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt— ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (9.59 a.m.), by leave: Last Thursday, I had the opportunity to visit Macgregor State High School to launch a new publication, namely a consumer guide for young people called Psst! Post School Survival Tips. This Government believes that consumer education is essential and that people, young or old, should be fully aware of their consumer rights and know how to seek redress.

We have recently sought to better inform Queensland seniors with the revised Agewise kit and now it is the turn of school leavers. It will not be long until most of this current crop of Year 12 students become adults in the legal sense of the word and will have all the rights that that entails: the right to vote, the right to buy alcohol and, from a consumer point of view, the right to be held legally responsible for contracts that they enter into—be it a contract to buy a new car or an application to rent a property.

A big trap for young people is making the adjustment of going from a fairly limited income to one that appears to be able to satisfy all their consumer demands. Not everyone can make this adjustment, and many people overcommit. Figures from Insolvency and Trustee Service Australia show that 660 Queensland people below the age of 25 years declared themselves bankrupt in the 1997-98 financial year. 356 of these bankruptcies were brought about by unemployment, 72 by the excessive use of credit cards and 124 by financial irresponsibility.

As Minister for Fair Trading, I know about the financial problems into which young people get themselves. We consider school leavers to be one of our priority targets. We recently identified them as the group most in need of information about financial responsibility.

The Post School Survival Tips booklet will help young people navigate issues such as buying a used car, renting accommodation, using credit, shopping on the Internet, buying a computer and knowing their refund rights. This guide will help school leavers navigate through life's events and gain consumer confidence when dealing with traders in the marketplace.

The Office of Fair Trading sees its role as an agency dedicated to reducing the difference between young consumers who know their rights and young consumers who use them effectively. After all, assertive, self-reliant consumers are more likely to shop around for the best deal, demand premium customer service and ultimately obtain the best possible benefits from the consumer marketplace.

Whilst vitally important in ensuring fiscal equality, consumer education is also essential in protecting consumers from unscrupulous characters in our community who prey on young consumers when they can. The booklet is being distributed throughout high schools as we speak and it is intended that all Year 12 students will receive a copy before the end of the school year.
