



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 24 November 1999

TRADE MEASUREMENT AMENDMENT BILL

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) (5.39 p.m.), in reply: I thank all members who have spoken in the debate today. It is interesting that so many members are interested in the area of trade measurement. It is obvious that members of Parliament have a great appreciation of the wonderful work that is done by the 25 trade inspection officers in this State. Members appreciate the large geographic area that those officers cover. They visit the Torres Strait and western Queensland. They work by themselves, often in fairly hostile environments. They have been featured on a number of television programs this year and have been dubbed the "consumer cops". They deserve the recognition that they are finally achieving, because they do a wonderful job for Queensland consumers.

As members have mentioned, trade inspection officers ensure that the measurements that are put on beer, spuds, sausages or petrol are accurate. The fair trading measurement inspectors measure even more interesting things, such as the shot-puts, javelins and tape measures that are used by the Little Athletics organisations that conduct sports for kids on Saturdays. The Queensland trade measurement inspectors actually measure the lotto balls, because it is very important that the lotto balls are of equal weight so that a particular ball does not fall before the others. As members have mentioned, trade inspection officers check weigh bridges. Sometimes they have a very mundane role, but it can also be a very interesting role.

Last week, the fair trading inspectors achieved an interesting prosecution. They found that 500 gram packets of garlic that had come from China had shrunk en route and were more than 5% short. The importer was fined \$1,500 as a result of the underweighing of that stock.

Mr Grice: Does the identical ball inspector have such discoveries?

Ms SPENCE: I am not going to talk any more about the lotto balls. Members can talk to the fair trading inspectors about that. I invite all members to go to the trade measurement section of the department, which is very interesting. They have all the weights and measures on show. It makes for an interesting couple of hours, if members are keen to talk more about lotto balls.

The trade measurement inspectors do a lot of work relating to seafood imports. We are looking at making legislative changes in that significant area as well.

I appreciate the comments of all members of the House, particularly the member for Bulimba, who showed a unique understanding of the importance of this particular area, and the member for Indooroopilly. The member for Noosa, the shadow Minister, raised a number of issues concerning the annual reports that I do not have answers to today. I suggest that if he puts those questions on notice, he will receive more detailed answers. They were legitimate questions.

The member for Lockyer foreshadowed a number of amendments that he will move, and I will be happy to discuss those amendments in the Committee stage of the debate today. The member for Broadwater raised a very interesting point which, frankly, I had not thought much about. It is an important point, which is: why should people pay for random testing? It does not seem fair that if one is picked out at random one has to pay for the privilege, even though that person may not have done anything wrong. From talking to Mr Bartlett, who heads the Trade Measurement Branch, I understand that he is working on the issue. He would like to propose some legislative changes. In fact, we are

required to charge them under the legislation and it would need some agreement if we stopped charging them. I thank the member for raising that point. We need to give it some attention.

I will be moving amendments in relation to fining employees if they are using incorrect weights and measures. The amendments introduce provisions to target employees only where we can prove that the employees were correctly educated in their role. That might alleviate some of the member's concerns.

I am happy to answer the question with respect to the Jandowae weighbridge, because I have a briefing from my officers on the matter. Servicing licensees or repairers are licensed to stamp scales when they are correct and, in fact, can install, adjust and stamp all new weighbridges in Queensland. Spot inspections occur at a later date to ensure accuracy. I am not sure if that answers all the concerns raised by the member for Lockyer, but I am happy to discuss that with him at a later date. He raised a very legitimate issue on behalf of his constituents.

I thank all members for their support for the Bill. I commend the Bill to the House.
