



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 30 November 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Annual Toy Survey

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) (9.56 a.m.), by leave: The Office of Fair Trading has just completed its annual toy survey and the results are encouraging. Consumer safety officers surveyed several major toy traders and discount stores in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast. They also surveyed stores in Rockhampton as an example of a city that typifies the unique variety of traders found in most Queensland regional centres. The survey concentrated on toys in the \$1 to \$20 price range because there is a greater risk of problems with low-cost toys.

The purpose of the annual survey is to identify and remove unsafe toys from sale and to test others that are considered suspect. The Office of Fair Trading will use this valuable marketplace intelligence to provide guidance to consumers to help them make informed, safe choices about toys in the lead-up to one of the busiest consumer periods—Christmas.

In addition, our consumer safety officers provide valuable advice to suppliers on safety deficiencies. The Office of Fair Trading has introduced mandatory safety requirements for toys. By law, toys judged as suitable for children under three must not contain small parts as they are a choking hazard. In other words, if it cannot be bitten, tugged, sucked, chewed, jumped on and thrown about, forget it. Also, projectile toys for all ages should not be powerful enough to cause eye injuries.

Thirty-five retail toy suppliers were surveyed and around 350 different toys were examined. As well as determining if toys comply with mandatory manufacturing requirements, the Office of Fair Trading is also concerned about labelling on toys that could affect child safety. Labels should be accurate; otherwise consumers lose faith in them and in the toy market generally.

I am very pleased to report that only two of the 350 toys surveyed were regarded as dangerous and needing to be withdrawn from sale. One of these was a \$3.95 toy submachine gun set—a toy gun and four suction darts. Consumer safety officers were concerned that the toy gun could also discharge other, more lethal projectiles such as sharpened pencils. The toy store that supplied the toy gun has voluntarily agreed to remove it from sale. The consumer safety section is taking steps to identify the importer and pursue the voluntary removal of the toy from any other suppliers.

Eleven toys of the 350 surveyed were sent for safety testing. Of these, only one failed the test—a small wooden wheel toy shaped like a turtle. It is a simple push toy for infants. When the toy was subjected to tests to simulate biting, dropping and twisting, it broke into parts that were small enough to choke a child. The Office of Fair Trading has asked the toy retailer to stop supplying this toy and to remove and check other wooden toys to ensure their standards are intact. A further 16 toys were either incorrectly labelled or lacked safety warnings. The retailers concerned have been advised about these deficiencies.

Although these failings are not regarded as serious enough to warrant withdrawal of the products, the practice of alerting retailers is expected to ensure improved performance in the future. Consumers must have confidence in labelling. Of course, many toys suitable for older children pose dangers for the younger ones. Much Christmas paraphernalia—such as fabric Christmas stockings with attached adornments—are also potentially hazardous.

The survey results are pleasing in that they show a generally high level of marketplace compliance with toy safety standards. Only two products withdrawn from sale out of 350 surveyed shows a high level of safety awareness. And for this, I commend retailers throughout Queensland. And lastly, but most importantly, I wish all consumers a happy and safe Christmas.
