



Speech by

**KEN TURNER**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

---

Hansard 30 November 1999

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY**

**Mr TURNER** (Thuringowa—IND) (10.27 a.m.): Next Friday is the International Day of People with a Disability. On that day we celebrate their progress, achievements and their improved quality of life. In 1981 we celebrated the Year of the Disabled. In that year, we opened the closet doors to bring disability services out of the Dark Ages. Changes have been made to laws, funding, support services, building codes and attitudes, bringing about positive improvements to their quality of life.

Access to recreational activities is on the increase, with community understanding and awareness contributing greatly towards providing specifically designed leisure activities and equipment. The user friendly Strand development showed a lot of forethought and understanding, allowing easy access to the beach, along with the much longed for disability accessible jetty, which will be great for fishing.

In my maiden speech in Parliament I declared my commitment to creating equal opportunity for the disability sector of the community. Changes in community attitudes have gone a long way to empowering people to see their abilities instead of their disabilities. Many now enjoy careers, study and participate in sporting activities, drive their own cars, live alone and travel. Although there are still a lot of gaps to be filled, these people can see a light at the end of the tunnel.

It was Sara Henderson who said, "If you can't see a light at the end of the tunnel, slide right down there and light the bloody thing yourself." Today many people are doing just that, but there are still others who are unable to do that. They need us, as a conscious caring body, to slide right down that tunnel and, on their behalf, light the biggest bonfire we have ever seen. We need to light that flame not only for people with a disability but also for the family carers who take up the shortfall of Government assistance. They carry the burden of meeting the needs of their loved ones, and their voluntary sacrifice does not go unnoticed. Awareness, understanding of the challenges met every day by people with a disability, a little of our time and assistance where needed—this is how we can celebrate the International Day of People with a Disability. It is an honour for me to be invited to open this celebration for Thuringowa.

---