



Speech by

JOHN ENGLISH

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Hansard 16 May 2001

AUSTRALIAN EXPORT SERVICES OVERSEAS PROGRAM

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (7.05 p.m.): I rise to inform the House about the activities of an organisation called AESOP Business Volunteers. AESOP is an acronym for Australian Export Services Overseas Program.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce, industry and the Australian government established AESOP in 1981 as a joint initiative. Its aim is to seek and assist in the development of a fledgling private sector in the Pacific and Thailand, and to promote understanding between Australians and peoples of other countries.

AESOP undertakes around 220 projects each year using over 150 volunteers. The essence of the program is to aid in the transfer of much-needed workplace skills from Australian volunteers to their local counterparts. The volunteers act as trainers and advisers and do not take line management positions.

The range of tasks undertaken by AESOP volunteers is diverse. It would be easier to explain what AESOP volunteers do not do than to list all the services that they provide. AESOP will not accept projects in the clinical medical area. However, it will provide support with administration, engineering and maintenance. AESOP does not send out primary or secondary teachers. However, it does support vocational education and curriculum development. These are the only two limitations to AESOP volunteer programs.

In the last few months, Queensland volunteers have undertaken projects in the following countries: Papua New Guinea, Fiji, the Philippines, Kiribati, the Cook Islands, Niue and Thailand. Some of the tasks included installing a solar power system for a school in Kiribati, the development of a fisheries plan for Nauru, establishing a bakery in the Cook Islands and working with a rural community in Laos to improve cattle breeding.

A resident of the Redlands, Mr Rod Carter, is currently in Samoa to assist in the relocation of an ammonia refrigeration plant, which is located only a few inches above the high tide mark, to a site that will still be usable if the water level rises due to the greenhouse effect.

AESOP is also prepared to assist in Australian remote and rural communities. I have brought the minister's attention to this organisation. Maybe it could be used to facilitate projects in our Aboriginal communities. Rod and all volunteers are an example of what we are currently celebrating in the International Year of the Volunteer, that is, altruism.
