



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

International Year of Volunteers Youth Campaign

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (9.58 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday I had the pleasure of launching the International Year of Volunteers Youth Campaign. It is an important campaign because it formally recognises the significant contribution our young people make in their communities. They form the lifeblood of organisations such as Surf Life Savers, many of the local rural fire brigades, the State Emergency Service, and they provide the thousands of people necessary to raise funds for local charities.

Yesterday I also unveiled the first of 100 billboards recognising the contribution of our volunteers. Throughout the year these will be appearing all over the state. The billboard, titled *Queenslander's—lending a hand*, has been generously sponsored by GOA Billboards. One hundred billboards throughout the state will promote and recognise the work of Queensland's volunteers.

I am proud to say that the Queensland government was the first state government to acknowledge the contribution of our volunteers in this International Year of the Volunteer. We did this by allocating almost \$300,000 to 55 volunteer groups throughout Queensland for community projects as part of the state government's recognition of the International Year of the Volunteer. These funds were provided for a wide range of events and celebrations to say thank you for the army of volunteers throughout this state. Applications for a second round of funding are currently being sought.

Tomorrow the Premier and I will be presenting the Premier's Awards to some of Queensland's most recognised volunteers representing communities throughout the state. We will also be launching a new website designed to profile ordinary Queenslanders making extraordinary contributions. We have produced special International Year of the Volunteer medallions and certificates to honour the achievements of volunteers throughout Queensland. Each member of parliament will be provided with 20 medallions and certificates to award to volunteers who have made an outstanding contribution in their community. The medallions will be ready for distribution in the next few weeks.

Volunteers are important to Queensland. Nowhere is the work of our volunteers more obvious than in some of our smaller communities. These are the people who comprise the local school's P&C committee, who are the backbone of the sports club, the scouts, guides and the range of other organisations that make up our towns and cities. I would urge anyone in the community who is aware of an individual who should be recognised for their dedication and generosity of spirit to make sure that that person is nominated. All too often the volunteers who make up our invisible army go unrewarded. This is a tremendous opportunity to show our gratitude.

Volunteers have traditionally provided important resources for many local communities and, in many cases, maintained important services and facilities. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that 524,000 Queenslanders formally volunteer 93 million hours, which is worth approximately \$2 billion each year. These are ordinary people making an extraordinary contribution. They give up their own valuable spare time to help others. They ask for no reward. All too often they receive little community recognition. They invest a significant amount of time and energy into training our young people, raising money for charities and delivering a whole range of services which would be struggling without their assistance.

The International Year of the Volunteer gives us an opportunity to examine the impact volunteers have on our communities and the immense contribution they make. I am wearing—and all members were given one this morning—an International Year of the Volunteer lapel pin. I note that many members have taken the opportunity to wear the pin this morning. I thank them for that. It collectively gives us the opportunity to show the thousands of Queensland volunteers that they do a magnificent job.
