



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 20 June 2001

LEGACY TRUST FUND BILL

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (5.03 p.m.), in reply: I thank all members for their support of the Legacy Trust Fund Bill. The member for Gregory acknowledged the opposition's support of the bill and showed in his contribution to the debate tonight a genuine commitment to people with vision impairment and the blind. I thank the member for Indooroopilly for his thoughtful speech. He understands well the situation of all the various vision impaired organisations in this state. In his short time in this House he has already displayed a very genuine commitment to people with a disability in his own electorate. I thank the member for Cunningham for his contribution. He has some concern about the distribution of the \$370,000. I can assure him and the opposition that this money will be advertised. All vision and blind organisations are entitled to apply for a grant from this \$370,000. It is not a matter of my sitting down and picking out which ones I like best. The department will assess each application on its merit and make recommendations to me. That is the normal grant process. We will follow that grant process in this regard.

I thank the member for Bulimba for his contribution and indeed enlightening the House on the work that the builders labourers union has done in the past to assist people with low vision in this state. I was unaware of its enormous contribution in the area of fundraising. I am pleased that he drew it to my attention. I also thank the member for Mudgeeraba, who brings to this chamber an extensive understanding of the disability area through her work in that field. I think that is important. Very few of us have that background. I am pleased that the member for Mudgeeraba is on my legislative committee, because I think she will add a lot in our policy debates on disability services.

The issue of distributing this money is an issue that is close to my heart. When I was first elected to parliament I was talked into taking on the presidency of the Narbethong association. The previous president had been a member of parliament, Mr Val Bird. I understand that presidents had always been members of parliament. Val came to see me and said, 'Now it's your turn, Judy. You've got to take on Narbethong. I've left parliament,' which I did. I remained the president of that association for about five years. It changed its name from the Narbethong association to the Blind and Low Vision Support Organisation. I understand that it has now amalgamated with Vision Queensland.

Members of this House and those who have been involved in the disability sector dealing with the vision impaired in this state have acknowledged that there have been too many small organisations dealing with blind and low vision people. We have always wanted to see amalgamations, but as in all things amalgamations have been very difficult. In the last few years, though, we have seen some amalgamations in this sector. As a result, we will end up with a more efficient non-government sector in the area of vision impairment in this state. I look forward to continuing my involvement in this sector in future years.

Tonight this legislation will end years of uncertainty about a fund that has been built up since 1917 by very genuine and generous Queenslanders. This act will honour the last will and testament of people who want their money to be used for blind and vision impairment. More importantly, it will enable the fund to flow more easily to the people intended to benefit from the fund, that is, Queenslanders who are blind or who have low vision. I thank all members for their support of this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.