



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 5 December 2001

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

International Volunteers Day

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (10.13 a.m.) by leave: Queensland's volunteers are ordinary people making an extraordinary contribution to communities throughout the state. They are real people and real heroes, and the Beattie government gives thanks to them on this special day, International Volunteers Day 2001.

As all members of this House would be aware, most community service goes on behind the scenes, uncelebrated and unrecognised. It is evident in both urban and regional areas and the one common thread that stretches across all groups and organisations can be summed up by the word 'commitment'. It is this commitment to serve day after day that truly makes volunteering heroic. In financial terms, the latest information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that volunteers contribute 116.2 million hours of support to Queensland's communities each year, which is worth \$2.5 billion to the state's economy.

It has been estimated that every Queensland family is supported in one way or another by about 20 volunteers, be they surf-lifesavers, netball coaches, firefighters, museum guides or actors in community theatre. Volunteers provide their services free of charge because they are committed to the people who make up their community. They provide their services because they care about what kind of society we live in and because they have seen an opportunity to make a contribution and a difference.

In this, the International Year of the Volunteer, the Queensland government has paid tribute to each and every one of them for giving their time and energy to helping others, especially the vulnerable in our communities. Volunteers do not just provide services in the traditional ways we think they do; they speak up in support of indigenous issues, they show compassion and care to refugees, and they take action to change the world. We should remember that some of our greatest social movements have started with the work of volunteers and that these movements, such as the environmental and the women's movements, have now become part of mainstream society.

In Queensland, volunteers show a commitment to their communities in a wide variety of ways. Just as diverse are the motivations and the backgrounds of people who give their time to lend a hand. The International Year of the Volunteer has provided a wonderful opportunity for all Queenslanders to pay tribute to the volunteers who make our communities better places to live. I thank all members of this House for their active involvement in this special year.

In acknowledgment of the vital role that volunteers play in our community, the Queensland government has, for the first time in the state's history, developed a draft policy and discussion paper on volunteering titled 'Engaging Queensland'. The draft policy will be released for two months of community consultation before being finalised in 2002.

Volunteering is not just about the individual. Increasingly, corporate Queensland is also playing a role. The Queensland government has been committed to recognising the work of volunteers throughout the state during this year. Tomorrow we will also be recognising the work of the corporate sector in their valuable support of the community by presenting the International Year of the Volunteer Corporate Awards.

Corporations, businesses and employees are increasingly seeing volunteering and community partnerships as part of their jobs. They do so not because it is a nice add-on for the company annual report but because corporate community partnerships are increasingly a core part of their business. The purpose of the International Year of the Volunteer Corporate Awards is to enable the corporate and community sectors to celebrate and share their partnership achievements while inspiring others to follow their lead.

In addition to the nine awards in the categories of large, medium and small businesses, I will also present to one Queensland organisation the International Year of the Volunteer Outstanding Achievement Award. Those nominated are companies that have demonstrated their commitment to the community and, in doing so, each winner has made a significant contribution to Queensland. The International Year of the Volunteer has inspired many more Queenslanders to contribute their services. Let us all be inspired by the efforts of our volunteers.

On behalf of all Queenslanders, we say thank you to every volunteer in this state. We acknowledge that you are doing something of great importance for our community.
