



Speech by

Hon. R. WELFORD

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard 17 May 2001

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Court Volunteers

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: I want to draw to the attention of honourable members and acknowledge the efforts of more than 100 volunteers who help people dealing with the court system in Queensland.

As the Premier and my colleague the Minister for Families outlined in this place earlier this week, our government has taken active steps to acknowledge the outstanding work of volunteers throughout Queensland. Among these unsung heroes who deserve recognition are the more than 100 people who willingly give up their own time to work as volunteers in courthouses throughout our state. They are there to help everyone who enters the court, from victims of crime, people called as witnesses, those involved in domestic violence matters and the families of alleged offenders.

Like the thousands of volunteers throughout Queensland being recognised through the International Year of the Volunteer this week, these are ordinary people making an extraordinary contribution. They give up their own valuable time to help others. They ask for no reward and all too often they receive little community recognition.

I want to make special mention of a group of volunteers at the Inala Magistrates Court. This is one of the more special and unheralded volunteer groups involved with any community in Queensland—some people have been helping out at the Inala Court for as long as 11 years. These volunteers give emotional support and general information about where to go, who to speak with in the court system and how the courts work. They ease the burden on court staff, police prosecutors and duty lawyers and help reduce people's anxiety in their first encounter with our court system. They do not take the place of court staff but provide additional support services.

For example, many court users are unable to read or write or have non-English speaking backgrounds. They find the court process quite intimidating. These volunteers help ease that anxiety. They help fill out legal aid forms, identify those who may need an interpreter and even mind children when their parents are in court.

In this week celebrating the International Year of the Volunteer, it is appropriate for our parliament to highlight the work of these court volunteers and acknowledge the difference they make. I will be visiting the Inala Magistrates Court this afternoon and will have great pleasure in presenting these special volunteers with certificates of appreciation for their work.

I am sure members will agree that the willingness of these volunteers to give up their own time and support others demonstrates outstanding community spirit which deserves recognition.
