



Speech by

RONAN LEE

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

Hansard 20 June 2001

LEGACY TRUST FUND BILL

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (4.44 p.m.): I rise to enthusiastically support the Legacy Trust Fund Bill 2001.

An honourable member: Enthusiastically? You don't look enthusiastic.

Mr LEE: I am very enthusiastic about this bill. Honourable members would have already heard when the minister introduced the bill that, since the days of the Goss government, it has been the intention of every government, particularly the Beattie Labor government, to advantage community organisations whose sole purpose is to advantage those with disabilities. In this context it has to be said that the initiative of an earlier Labor government has been vindicated. By that I mean that there can be no doubting the wisdom of the Goss government's decision to place the Queensland Blind Industrial Centre in the hands of a community organisation.

I know that since Vision Queensland has been in place, the board and its chief executive officer have been able to cut running costs by half. Sales of goods produced by blind workers have multiplied by a factor of five. How many organisations in the public sector or the private sector for that matter could make that boast? At the same time, Vision Queensland introduced a quality assurance regime that has been acknowledged as a leader in its field. Not only does this company, which employs people who have a vision impairment, have its workers fully accredited for its quality assurance procedures; in the year 2000 the company also received a silver award in the non-profit sector from the Australian Organisation for Quality.

Honourable members need not worry that by passing this bill funds will be handed to irresponsible people; quite the contrary. Honourable members can also rest assured that by passing this bill the intentions of donors and testators who supported the Legacy Trust Fund when it was in the hands of the Queensland government will be honoured.

One of the recommendations of a 1994 inquiry into the future of the Queensland Blind Industrial Centre was that, as Queensland had many small vision impairment agencies, efforts should be made to amalgamate some existing agencies. Such amalgamations are never easily achieved. They could not be justified unless it could be shown that people with a vision impairment would be advantaged as a result.

Vision Queensland, with the support of the Queensland government, has pursued the objective of amalgamation. I am advised that in the second half of this year Vision Queensland will merge with the Royal Blind Foundation of Queensland. This amalgamation will result in Queensland having, for the first time, a significant blindness support agency like the royal blind societies in most states. This enlarged organisation, brought about by the hard work of Vision Queensland and an initiative of a Labor government, will be delivering a wide range of services, including home help for blind people.

In the forward planning for the merger, regional Queensland has not missed out. For the first time, Queenslanders with a vision impairment who live outside the south-east corner of the state will be able to access the excellent support and services provided by Vision Queensland.

Of course, it is not just Vision Queensland and the royal blind society that provide assistance to Queensland's vision impaired. Since 1992, Blind Citizens Australia has carried on its work in this state through a Brisbane branch. The organisation, formerly known as the National Federation of Blind Citizens of Australia, was established in 1975. Blind Citizens Australia's mission is to achieve equity and

equality through the empowerment of blind and vision-impaired Australians. Its aim is to promote positive community attitudes, and to strive for high quality and accessible services. For instance, the Brisbane branch produces an audio magazine called *Soundabout* on a quarterly basis. The work done on a voluntary basis by Blind Citizens Australia since 1992 is to be commended, and the organisation will be eligible to apply to the Minister for Disability Services for some of the funds released when the Legacy Trust Fund Bill becomes law.

I know that the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, an organisation that will be known to all honourable members for its excellent work, has already expressed an interest in accessing funds to be released by this legislation. It will be, of course, for the government through the minister to decide on individual applications for these funds, subject to the principles laid down in this bill.

Other services that may wish to make application include the Queensland Narrating Service and the Queensland Braille Writing Association. The Queensland Narrating Service is a not-for-profit organisation providing audio information for people with print disabilities. It owes its success to a team of past and present voluntary narrators. They have been providing an invaluable service, firstly, under the title of the Queensland Tape Recordists Association and, since 1968, under the present title.

Similarly, the services of the Queensland Braille Writing Association are provided by a team of volunteers. The association provides braille and Moon, that is, embossed writing tuition and reading material, to empower blind people to live with dignity and independence. The association also has a special request section that translates almost anything into braille, from a good book to recipes, bank statements or even instructions on an electrical appliance.

Once again, these are the types of organisations eligible to apply to share in the funds freed up by the bill. Thanks to this legislation, funds totalling about \$370,000 will be freed to benefit the people for whom they were intended—the blind and vision impaired. The legislation is a fine example of the government cutting through red tape and making sense of an arcane administrative system so that the people of Queensland are the winners. I commend this bill to the House.
