



Speech by

**DESLEY SCOTT**

**MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE**

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Hansard 16 April 2002

**PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mrs DESLEY SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (6.09 p.m.): I rise to support this bill and do so with considerable interest in the private employment agencies sector. The regulation of private employment agencies has been in vogue since 1915, with various changes leading up to the introduction of the Private Employment Agencies Act 1983, which requires applicants to undergo considerable checks involving police and industrial magistrates and imposing significant costs in application and licensing fees. The independent review recommended that the present act be phased out over two years under the watchful eye of an advisory committee. The provisions to protect work seekers will thus be transferred to the Industrial Relations Act 1999.

I note that special provisions will be introduced governing agents in the modelling and entertainment industry, one which is particularly close to my heart, having three sons all of whom are professional musicians and entertainers and a daughter-in-law in the fashion industry who hires fashion models. Until one reaches the very high echelons of the entertainment industry one is viewed by many as not having a real job. Honourable members should try getting a home loan if they say they are a professional musician. I am particularly pleased to see measures in place to address issues relating to this industry and its professionalism. I find many in the arts are very happy for they are following their passion, and they require protection and respect.

In my electorate I view the employment agencies as playing a vital role. I recently met with two representatives from Nova Employment, a not-for-profit organisation which focuses on people with disabilities and special needs who are considering entering the work force. This is a wonderful organisation and I applaud the work it does. For people who find it a challenge to identify their skills and the area in which they might be suitable as employees and then prepare a CV and overcome some of the obstacles they might face, Nova is there to guide them in all aspects and give support throughout the process and into their period of employment. So many of our people with various disabilities have amazing skills which rightly should be channelled into the appropriate area, be it in a voluntary capacity or in the paid work force. The personal satisfaction gained by getting up each morning and being needed is great. I hope to see Nova engaged more and more in my area to accomplish this vital task.

However, there is another vital aspect to the whole employment industry which has taken on an important role in my electorate. Rather than having just one set of narrow guidelines, our government has diversified programs to address employment issues and catch in the net a very wide range of prospective employees. One very important scheme which results in a very high rate of full-time employment is the Community Jobs Plan. Such organisations as BoysTown LinkUp and Logan City Council have been responsible for many projects using local people, many of whom are young people, to work on our parks and gardens, streetscaping and a number of innovative school projects, such as the large rotunda at Berrinba East Primary, which is the focus for all manner of happy school events.

At present, BoysTown LinkUp is involved in a project at our multicultural neighbourhood centre where it is doing major building renovations and learning some very diverse skills. Many of these projects also make a major contribution to the amenity of our community. The electorate of Woodridge is a hive of activity, with hundreds of volunteers out and about every week performing an interesting range of activities. Through this avenue some of my volunteers are introduced into the paid work force.

I am here today to declare that, if there is any truth in the saying that the health of a community is gauged by how it treats its most vulnerable citizens, my community is indeed a very healthy one. A few weeks ago the Endeavour Foundation in Kingston sent out the word that it was planning a

workathon on Friday, 12 April, and was inviting the community and organisations in the area to join them. They had decided to clear the scrubby bush thick with lantana at the back of their centre so they could establish a community garden.

Debbie Kingston at Endeavour made contact with local organisations and set about planning the day with her workers, volunteers and client families. The young clients at Endeavour also helped in the planning and decided that money raised on the day from sponsorships should go towards assisting a young person to attend the Special Needs Games. The centre had earlier established a vegie garden, which was always a popular activity with the clients and so it was decided that an enlarged garden would prove to be a great community asset.

When I called at the centre mid-morning, the scene that met me was truly amazing. A hundred or so people were engaged in various activities. Some gathered in groups enjoying the social activity while having a break. Down into the bush area a chainsaw buzzed, someone else was using a whipper snipper, and an army of volunteers and supporters was using scythes, picks, mattocks, rakes and hoes to hack out the undergrowth.

The Endeavour clients thoroughly enjoyed the experience also and were down helping to remove the undergrowth, emerging with armloads of branches and lantana to pile on the mountain of greenery being prepared for mulching. The obvious joy on their faces was something to see. Our local community radio station, FM 101, did an outdoor broadcast on the day and the music created a party atmosphere, with a number of clients on their feet enjoying a dance. Special guest of the day was Ross Wilson, well-known and well-loved entertainer, who happily chatted to all present, signed CDs and did an on-air interview. Might I add that the local state member took advantage of the photo opportunity.

Among the community workers were representatives of BoysTown LinkUp, Youth and Families Services, Logan Youth Connections, Booran Park Neighbourhood Centre, Cultural Solidarity, Murri Network and our community renewal groups. Local police, Annette Turner, our Logan City Council Visual Arts Coordinator, and Diane Mason from Logan TAFE also joined the throng. A number of local businesses, such as the Logan Tree Specialists, volunteered their time. It really was an extraordinary demonstration of true community spirit.

The day started out at 7.30 with the young people cooking breakfast. After a morning of hard effort, the workers were treated to a kup Murri lunch organised by our Cultural Solidarity group, which they thoroughly enjoyed. At last count, some \$3,500 was raised by sponsorship and will mean that one young athlete will be assisted to attend the Special Needs Games.

When this project is completed it will bring a great deal of satisfaction and joy not only to the Endeavour Foundation workers and clients but also to this entire community. Working together brings out the very best in people and this has been a wonderful opportunity for my community to let Endeavour know we care and really appreciate the work they do. I commend each and every person who took part in this outstanding event. It was a lot of fun. A lot of bush was cleared and, most of all, new partnerships have been forged. Once again, my community has demonstrated why I believe living and working in Logan is such a unique and special experience.

This bill reflects a more effective mode of operation for this industry and has been prepared following rigorous consultation with both private employment agents and workers. I am happy to support the bill and commend the minister and his staff.

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