



Speech by

DESLEY SCOTT

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Hansard 6 November 2002

FAIR TRADING AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (6.06 p.m.): This legislation has a number of components, such as certain national competition policy reforms, changes to the requirements for the registration of business names and amendments to protect consumers requiring emergency repairs following natural disasters. All of those provisions will add to existing laws to protect people from unscrupulous operators who are always awaiting an opportunity to swoop when people are at their most vulnerable. This is particularly so for the elderly and those with mental or physical disabilities who live in our community. There have been notable instances of roof repairers, painters and the like who target people living alone. They present on their doorstep offering to do maintenance work for a special price if they consent on the spot while they are in the area. Of course, the price is more often highly inflated rather than discounted.

The amendment to the Business Names Act 1962 raises the penalty for failing to register a business name from \$300 to \$3,000. Proof of identity and the required fee must accompany the application. All subsequent new proprietors will similarly be required to supply proof of identity. This register of businesses will give further protection to householders and, hopefully, discourage a lot of the shonky operators out there.

Clauses 8 and 9 of part 3 of this bill make provision for a number of protective measures following natural disasters when emergency repairs are required. Written contracts will be required with proof of identity and measures to outlaw pressure tactics are contained in the door-to-door provisions of the legislation. Other measures, such as the cooling-off period and specific hours to attend a home, will not be required.

In recent years I have had far fewer reports of unscrupulous operators, or fly-by-nighters, doing repairs on homes that are totally inadequate and charging outlandish prices. I believe that a lot of the credit must go to our wonderful Logan and Beenleigh district Home Assist-Home Secure program, under which people do many repairs for aged and disability pensioners. I suspect that if the repairs are outside the guidelines of this organisation, nonetheless they would give very good advice to their clients so that they avoid the unskilled tradesperson and excessive charges.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting our Home Assist Secure and speaking with project manager Lesley Wilcox. Its budget has been given an additional boost this year due to the very heavy demand on its services. Administration officer Elaine Dudley is kept busy answering calls and keeping records. Patrick Crilly, chief field officer, and his two assistant field officers, Ray Ireland and Paul Nielsen, are three very talented, innovative tradesmen who are multiskilled and are able to make the difficult look simple. They carry out minor modifications to homes, clean gutters and attend to taps and toilet leaks—amongst other jobs. This organisation and others such as Boystown LinkUp are helping many in our community remain in their homes and live independently. This bill before the House today will ensure even more protection for the vulnerable. When it comes to seeking reliable, affordable services, we all are vulnerable and need both protection and information.

I commend the minister and her Office of Fair Trading for their community information booklets and the level of information and protection they give to all facets of consumerism. We all are recipients of their services. I applaud these additional measures and commend the bill to the House.