



Speech by

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CARERS (RECOGNITION) BILL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (8.16 pm): It is my great pleasure to rise to speak to the Carers (Recognition) Bill 2008. I want to congratulate the shadow minister, the honourable member for Burdekin, and the honourable minister for something that I have not seen in this place before, and that is support from the government for a private member's bill moved by the official opposition. When I picked up the library research brief this morning outside the library, I must admit that I wondered what specious or spurious reasons we would have for this bill not being supported by the government, because I really did not expect that would happen. I think it is important that we acknowledge that. I thought it would not be supported and that another bill would come in after some short time that would have the same principles—

Mr Hoolihan: That's paranoia, isn't it?

Mr LANGBROEK: Well, it is a reasonably based paranoia, based on what I have seen over 4½ years. As I say, I think it is a great thing. It reminds me of when I was at parliament at a function in my role as shadow minister for health and someone who was a carer spoke to me about what the government had promised in 2001. I said, 'Send me some information about that,' as we say to many people when in this job. I did not expect that this gentleman would do it. He did send me something about the fact that the government had promised—as the honourable member for Capalaba mentioned earlier this evening—in 2001 that it would bring in a carers recognition act in 2001. So I faxed it to the honourable member for Burdekin and called her. I said, 'I think this could be the basis for a private member's bill,' and here we are tonight some months later seeing it come into legislation, albeit with some amendments that I understand the shadow minister will debate in the consideration in detail stage. As I say, I think it is a wonderful thing and proof positive of the recognition that we are giving to carers which has been done in other jurisdictions before now.

I note from the original explanatory notes that the bill is created to recognise the rights and needs of carers who, as many of us have said here tonight, play a vitally and largely unrecognised role in the community. By implementing this legislation the parliament of Queensland will be acknowledging the positive impact carers make on the people they care for and on the wider community, as well as recognising the special difficulties and circumstances which face carers.

Special mention is made of young carers and carers in regional and remote Queensland due to the exceptional circumstances they face. The bill incorporates the carer's charter, giving carers and their representative bodies a framework for all public sector entities to refer to when making decisions that affect carers. I note that one element of that provision has been modified. Amendment No. 8 says in terms of decisions affecting carers: 'Failure to comply with this part does not affect the validity of any decision.' That seems to take away from the fact that if we are going to consult with people there should be a legislative reason for that and that that should be given consideration.

The carer's charter contained 11 principles. I will read them into *Hansard* shortly. The charter will promote better recognition and consideration of carers. By implementing this legislation the bill provides a consistent framework for all public sector entities and gives carers recognition within our legislative structure. I note, as I have already said, that carers in Queensland have been waiting for recognition to be

formalised not just since 2003 when the recognition policy was first touted but from 2001, as the honourable member for Capalaba mentioned. I also note that other states and territories have implemented this carers recognition legislation—South Australia, Western Australia and the ACT. Once again, this is a very good Queensland Parliamentary Library brief. It was written in August 2008. It gives a lot of background for those of us who are interested in these matters.

I note that there was wide consultation by the honourable member for Burdekin with representatives of a number of carer organisations and individuals. Carers for people with disabilities, carers for aged individuals and family carers have been consulted on the legislation.

I want to read out the principles of the carer's charter. I know that they will be amended slightly, but I will let the member for Burdekin, the shadow minister, refer to those in the consideration in detail stage. The carer's charter states—

- 1 The State recognises the effort and dedication of carers in our community and that carers provide a vital service.
- 2 Carers deserve the respect of our community and should be supported within their community by all levels of government, institutions and organisations.
- 3 The views and needs of carers must be taken into account together with the views, needs and best interests of the people they care for when making policy decisions.
- 4 The importance of carers' work gives carers, or their representative bodies, the right to be included in the assessment, planning, delivery and review of services affecting carers.

As I understand it, the amendments will amend the clause about whether it should be a right to be included. I will be interested to see what happens with that amendment in the consideration in detail stage. It continues—

- 5 Complaints made by carers in relation to services that impact on them must be given careful consideration.
- 6 Carers should be recognised—
 - (a) for their unique knowledge and experience; and
 - (b) as individuals with their own needs.
- 7 The relationship between a carer and the person they care for should be respected and honoured.
- 8 Children and young people who are carers should be specifically supported by all of our community.
- 9 The caring responsibilities of children and young people should be minimised.
- 10 Carers need access to a wide range of responsive and affordable services to support them and their decision making in their role as a carer.
- 11 Remote and rurally based carers face additional difficulties caused by isolation.

That was the charter in the original bill. I note in the original bill that clause 5 mandated that the carer's charter should be taken into consideration by public authorities when making a decision regarding the assessment, planning, delivery and review of services affecting carers. As I mentioned, it was 2001 when there was a promise to establish a carers recognition act.

I note that one in every eight persons or about 14 per cent of the population are carers—535,500 people in Queensland. An issue that came up in the federal election last year was that many carers across Australia felt that there was a lack of recognition of the contribution they make. Many members may recall Kevin Rudd at his first community cabinet when a lady from Sydney spoke about the difficulty she was having taking care of her son. That is something that all of us as members of parliament have had experience of. Constituents speak about their problems. The honourable member for Springwood just mentioned this. People are very concerned about what is going to happen to their children when they pass on.

In my electorate I have a very elderly lady who has a disabled son who has said to me, 'What is going to happen if my son falls over?' She cannot lift him. The ambulance does not want to come to pick him up. She is very worried that he is going to suffer a serious injury. She is very concerned about what is going to happen as she gets older.

I note that we have an ageing population. The research brief says that in the United Kingdom the number of people aged over 85 is expected to increase by 50 per cent over the next decade. I know that we have an ageing cohort in Australia—the baby boomers; I am one of those at the tail end of the baby boomer generation. As we get older, there are going to be more demands on carers. Congratulations to the member for Burdekin for introducing the bill and to the minister for accepting it. I commend the bill to the House.