




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Speld

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (2.45 pm): Tonight here in parliament a very special organisation celebrates 50 years of supporting Queenslanders who have learning differences. The organisation is Speld, and it stands for supporting people experiencing learning differences. I want to emphasise the word 'difference'. People do not have a disability or a difficulty; they have a different way of learning. The dedicated staff and volunteers at Speld use evidence based practices to adjust learning and to unlock the potential of every Queenslander.

In 1969 Pat Savage set up an organisation to support people who were experiencing learning differences. At that time, there was nowhere else to turn. Many people will think about dyslexia, but there are many other learning differences. Regardless of why someone cannot read, we know that 34 per cent of poor readers in year 3 are still poor readers in year 9 and that 80 per cent of our prisoners have an identified learning difference.

In the past, many of the people who experienced learning differences were perhaps labelled disabled, difficult, stupid, lazy or worse. That is certainly what happened to my brother Pete. There are no doubt many people in the community who have been touched by Speld who do not even know it. I count myself in that category, finding out only recently that my brother Pete was supported by Speld to learn to read in the early 1970s. My mum told me that she and dad were worried about Pete until Speld helped him to read and he has not stopped reading since. Nearly 50 years later, that sense of relief that my mother felt at that time when my brother learnt to read is still very apparent.

Take a moment to think about how many people Speld have helped over those 50 years to discover the joy and power of reading, how many parents have felt that sense of relief and how many people have discovered that joy of reading. I would like to thank all of the volunteers and staff who have created and sustained Speld over the past 50 years, but particular thanks goes to the CEO, Marion McMahon. I would also like to acknowledge the students and their families.

There could perhaps be no greater way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Speld than to continue to grow and serve more people. I would like to thank Minister Grace and Education Queensland for recognising the value of Speld and backing that with increased funding. The CEO, Marion McMahon, has revitalised Speld and supercharged the growth of the organisation. In 2019 Speld has responded to 24,500 calls, conducted over 500 assessments and delivered 60 professional development sessions throughout the state. It has a book and resource library that supports students, families and teachers throughout the state.

Pat Savage could hardly have imagined in 1969 that the organisation she founded would still be growing 50 years later. She started the organisation because there was nothing to support people experiencing learning differences. To this day, Speld regularly deals with people who tell the staff and volunteers they were completely lost and alone before they found Speld—floundering around for a solution and support. Tonight Speld celebrates 50 years of being the organisation that people continue to turn to for support if they have a learning difference. Speld celebrates 50 years of unlocking people's full potential around this great state.