



Speech By
Hon. Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 19 March 2014

**COMMUNITIES LEGISLATION (FUNDING RED TAPE REDUCTION)
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (6.21 pm): Can I add my welcome to the councillor and guests in the House this evening. I rise to contribute to the debate on the Communities Legislation (Funding Red Tape Reduction) Amendment Bill introduced into the House by the honourable member for Aspley on 11 February 2014 and referred to the Health and Community Services Committee. They tabled their report on 12 March with three recommendations.

The main objective of this bill is to streamline current laws surrounding community organisations while preserving essential safeguards that protect taxpayers' money, the delivery of essential community services and service users. As it currently exists, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services administers its funding—some \$1.5 billion in 2012-13—under three separate acts. Consistent with this government's approach to legislative reform over the past two years, this bill seeks to remove this duplication and unnecessary legislative requirement by centralising and condensing regulation into one piece of legislation. As the Minister for Small Business in this government, I have to say it is a very welcome move.

This will make a series of improvements to the sector, including: providing a common legislative base for funding across the department; removing barriers to having one contract per organisation for the department; cutting red-tape costs for funded organisations by about \$2.6 million—very impressive; removing more than 60 pages of statute; and contributing to the department's 23 per cent regulatory reduction target.

In the past some organisations were required to complete multiple funding applications and have multiple versions of the same policies to receive funding from the department. This bill eradicates this onerous requirement and ensures that groups will only need to make one single application to the department for funding. It is important to remember that many of these organisations rely on volunteers with limited time and resources. As a government we should be doing everything we can to make the process easier and more accessible for them. Of course, there needs to be adequate safeguards in place, which the minister has comprehensively addressed in her speech.

Unlike the Labor member for Redcliffe, who just spent 30 minutes speaking in this House without mentioning any of the fantastic organisations in her electorate, I wish to share with the House some of the great work that is being carried out by local community organisations that receive funding from the minister's department in the electorate of Currumbin. Of particular note, I would like to commend the Palm Beach Neighbourhood Centre which, under the capable hands of coordinator Samantha Way, offers countless services to the people of the southern Gold Coast. Just to name a few, there is: child, youth and parent counselling; financial counselling; community meeting rooms and internet; parenting workshops; and legal information. The centre is a treasured community hub for our

residents who sometimes just need a little guidance and a helping hand to get their lives back on track. I am sure they join me in thanking the minister for her generous funding.

Another is the widely enjoyed southern Gold Coast 60 and Better Program that is providing invaluable social interaction for our elderly citizens. They promote an active and social lifestyle and encourage members to become involved in health-enhancing activities. Throughout the year they put on a number of events and have groups that meet weekly, including a walking group, line dancing and computer tuition. Being a compassionate government, we recognise the importance of providing support to these groups who offer our seniors social connectivity, company and entertainment they might not otherwise be able to access.

The department also provides funding to an organisation I have been a strong supporter and advocate of for a number of years now, the Blair Athol Accommodation and Support Program. Blair Athol offers various services to assist people suffering from homelessness. Under the amazing leadership of director Liz Fritz, this centre offers in some cases life-saving and often life-changing support to vulnerable members of our community. Social inclusion activities include: crisis intervention, counselling and emotional support; training on budgeting and financial management; practical assistance; hygiene; and advocacy.

Groups and organisations like these are the fabric of our community. The Newman government, under the careful and caring watch of the Minister for Communities, the Hon. Tracy Davis, are committed to continually improving the services offered to vulnerable Queenslanders.

I understand the minister and her department have been considered and deliberated on these reforms for some time. It is never an easy task to undertake regulatory reform, especially when it pertains to sensitive situations such as funding for community services as is the case here. This bill delivers essential reforms to the sector whilst preserving legal safeguards for essential services.

I really hope we hear from opposition speakers a little about some of the wonderful organisations that they have in their electorates instead of just bleating about the negatives. It is organisations in each of our electorates that are part of the reason we stand as MPs and part of the reason we want to represent those in the community who often do not have a voice for themselves. I commend the work of the minister and her department in terms of what they have been doing to make life not only better for the people in Currumbin but for those in all of Queensland.