



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Volunteers Week

SPEECH

Monday, 28 May 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker King, Catherine, MP

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Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing) (10:52): Today I would like to talk about the importance of volunteers in local communities. Volunteers Week was a perfect opportunity to celebrate all that is good about our community but particularly to acknowledge the wonderful contribution of volunteers. I want to pay tribute to United Way in Ballarat for its awards night that I attended last week.

If you ask the average Australian what they see as uniquely Australian characteristics, many would argue that it is the commitment to egalitarianism and friendship that really sets us apart. We see ourselves as strong and self-reliant but quick to offer a helping hand to those in need. From the very beginnings of the social experiment that was early Australia, our country has been founded on the notions of social inclusion and equality of opportunity for all. With more than six million Australians volunteering more than 730 million hours of their own time every year, it is clear that we have maintained our commitment to working together for a fair go for all.

Volunteering is intrinsic to a socially inclusive society. Volunteering connects us, strengthens our sense of belonging and creates positive relationships that build stronger local communities—from baking a cake for the school fete to providing companionship to the elderly, from planting trees to running the local footy club and from welcoming new arrivals to our country to being part of vital community services, such as the SES and CFA. It is clear how much our local community relies on its volunteers.

I am never surprised but constantly grateful when I see the extent of volunteering in our regional community. For instance, imagine how recent events such as the Ballarat Heritage Weekend, Clunes Booktown Festival, the Daylesford ChillOut Festival, the Ballan Autumn Festival or the Bullarto Tractor Pull would have been without committed volunteers. It is reasonable to assume that they would not exist at all.

The Clunes Booktown Festival, for example, which I attended in May, was the sixth that the Clunes Booktown has run and it is getting bigger each year. In fact, it has been recognised as the first international booktown in Australia. It saw over 60 book traders and, I am told, over 15,000 attendees—a good boost for local traders, and all of it run by volunteers.

The Ballan Autumn Festival was a terrific success. The judging of the local parade is something I enjoy every year, and there was great effort put in. Ballarat is very well known for its historic buildings. We had 10,000 people attend Ballarat Heritage Weekend. Again, without the efforts of volunteers, that weekend would not have been so successful. The Daylesford ChillOut festival, which is a terrific event for Daylesford, has been running since 1997. Again, it is run by a volunteer committee. It brings hundreds of thousands of people into the town of Daylesford, who spend money in the town and book out all of the bed and breakfasts over that weekend. It is an enormous boost for the economy, and it is all run on the back of volunteers. The Bullarto Tractor Pull is another example of the work of volunteers. It was a huge success, and the sheep shearing and vintage machinery were well and truly enjoyed by all.

These events are successful because of the enormous contribution of our volunteers. Nobody volunteers with the aim of seeking recognition but I want to recognise here today the volunteers in my community.