



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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ASSOCIATIONS INCORPORATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (3.47 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. Since 1982 the Associations Incorporation Act has provided a simple and inexpensive mechanism by which not-for-profit groups can incorporate. Currently in Queensland there are about 20,000 registered associations covering a range of interests, including social and sporting clubs, artistic societies, professional associations, charities, youth organisations and community groups. Incorporated associations also vary significantly in size. Many are small, locally based organisations that are made up entirely of volunteers who work hard towards the goals of their organisation. At the other end of the scale, licensed clubs with paid professional staff working in businesses with significant annual turnovers can also conceivably operate within the framework of an incorporated association.

Although incorporation under the act is not compulsory, there are obvious advantages for those organisations that elect to incorporate, especially with respect to the limitation of legal liability that can be attributed to individual members of individual organisations. In exchange for these benefits, incorporated associations are expected to pay a fee to the Office of Fair Trading and to comply with the various provisions governing the annual and audited financial statements of the organisation and the way in which the organisation is administered.

Following a review of the Associations Incorporation Act in 2005, several issues were identified as requiring amendment to make the legislation more workable and user friendly for incorporated associations across the state. Several of these recommendations have found their way into the bill before the House, and these amendments are very welcome.

One of the major issues that has been addressed is the difficulty that a lot of incorporated associations face in acquiring public liability insurance due to its considerable cost. This is addressed by removing the mandatory requirement for associations to take out public liability insurance. As a prudent precautionary measure, associations will be required to investigate the need to take out public liability insurance and make a decision about whether or not it is required. The mandatory public liability insurance requirement will stay for associations that hold land in trust under the Land Act 1994 and for incorporated associations that own or lease land. These are reasonable requirements. Incorporated associations that hold or lease land are, generally speaking, larger associations which would be more likely to have the means and the capacity to acquire public liability insurance.

The other change that will be made to the legislation relates to the reporting and auditing requirements under the act. Smaller associations incur high costs in complying with the current reporting and auditing requirements under the act as it currently stands. This will be addressed through the bill by a tiered system of reporting which will, importantly, allow associations with a total annual income and current assets of less than \$100,000 to avoid the full auditing and reporting requirements. This will certainly provide relief to thousands of associated incorporations across the state.

There are many incorporated associations in my electorate of Hinchinbrook. In the first instance, I would like to place on record my appreciation to the members and committees of those associations who provide community and support services to seniors or disabled people in my local communities. Support to these needy people in our community is really appreciated by those who receive them. The volunteers delivering these services are wonderful and very dedicated to their local community.

Another important group of incorporated associations in my electorate are the junior sporting clubs that provide organised sporting activities for the young people in our community. The junior soccer, tennis, basketball, Rugby League, cricket, gymnastics, netball, swimming and other sporting clubs provide an extremely important outlet for young people not only to get exercise—which has been given an enhanced profile recently—but also to assist in learning a number of the other simple lessons in life like sportsmanship, teamwork, patience, commitment and having determination to reach a goal that is either individually or collectively set.

Rugby League has an important place in Queensland's history and culture. I think all members in this place can agree with that. Rugby League has a particularly important place in the social fabric of rural and regional areas of Queensland, including in my electorate. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the success of the Herbert River Crushers in the 2006 Townsville and District Rugby League competition. The mighty Herbert River Crushers won both the reserve grade and the first grade grand finals last year in that competition. It was a memorable day for the club and the Herbert River district.

I was honoured this year to be asked to be the copatron of the Herbert River Crushers for 2007. I was pleased to accept and serve in conjunction with my fellow copatron, Warren Fletcher, who is a stalwart of Rugby League in the Herbert River district. This year is the first year that the Crushers have appointed people as patrons of the club, so it really was a privilege to be extended that invitation. You could really feel the whole community lift in the lead-up to the grand final of the Townsville and District Rugby League competition last year. The whole district was positively jumping when the Crushers won both the reserve and first grade finals. So, we can see the benefit that our local communities derive from the associated incorporations in our community.

In Tully, the Tully Tigers Rugby League club has a strong following in the local community. With Tully being my own home town, I have a soft spot for the Tigers and I attend games whenever possible.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Moorhead): Member for Hinchinbrook, just be careful of the relevance to the incorporated associations legislation before the House.

Mr CRIPPS: Absolutely, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will do my best. I promise not to take up too much more time of the House. I played many seasons in the front row for the Tully Tigers, and that probably goes some way to explaining the way I look. I was too stubborn to wear one of those head guards with the protective padding. That probably gives away a few clues as well. There are few more enjoyable places to spend a Saturday afternoon in Tully if you are a Tiger supporter than at the local showgrounds watching our boys take on the opposition team. The crowd is very parochial, and I wish the Tigers all the best for 2007.

One more club, Mr Deputy Speaker. In Innisfail, the Innisfail Leprechauns Rugby League club had a stellar 2006 season in the Cairns and District Rugby League competition. The Leprechauns took out all three grades—the under 18s, the reserve grade and the first grade grand finals—last season, and this all occurred in the year, Mr Deputy Speaker, and you will find this interesting, when the Leprechauns' home ground in Innisfail was unavailable for much of the season because of the damage caused to it by Cyclone Larry during that year.

Mr O'Brien: It was the Innisfail Rugby Union which won the reserve grade grand final.

Mr CRIPPS: That is quite right. The member for Cook is right. Again, the success of the club gave the community as a whole a huge lift after the very difficult challenges it had faced in the previous months. The value and the strength of the Leprechauns—indeed, all the clubs I have mentioned this afternoon—are drawn out of the closeness that the club has to the community. There is an old saying that Rugby League will die in Australia if it ever dies in the bush. The strength of the game at the moment in regional north Queensland suggests that there is still plenty of fight left in the great game of Rugby League.

All of these Rugby League clubs, their junior feeder clubs and the array of sporting clubs that cover many other sports in my electorate of Hinchinbrook and across Queensland are incorporated associations.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr CRIPPS: That is exactly right. As I said earlier today, be they sporting or social clubs, artistic societies, professional associations, charities, youth organisations or community groups, these incorporated associations are the backbone of our community.

As the member for Hinchinbrook, I am a proud member of many incorporated associations in my electorate, and I suspect the same goes for a lot of members in this place who have a range of private

interests and interests in their communities generally. The Australian-Italian Festival has an organising committee, which is an incorporated association. This is a high-profile festival in Ingham in my electorate where members can experience authentic Italian and Sicilian cuisine—I have had too much—refreshments and entertainment if they attended, and I encourage them to attend on 18 May to 20 May, for the information of the House.

I am a very proud member of the Queensland Society of St Andrew of Scotland, a membership that I understand I share with the Premier—and I trust this is the only one. The Society of St Andrew of Scotland promotes and celebrates the contribution of those of Scottish heritage in Queensland. It has been considerable. I am proud to wear the pin of the society in the chamber today during this debate.

At a local level in my electorate, I am also a member of the Innisfail Caledonian Society. This organisation is one of those small groups that punches well above its weight in terms of its contribution to the local community through its charity work. The pipe band attached to the society is in demand throughout the region, and I understand that it is often invited to travel long distances to perform at a range of events and functions.

The Northern Beaches Festival Committee is an incorporated association that organises the annual Northern Beaches Festival. This festival brings together the communities in the northern beaches area of the Thuringowa City Council local government area, including Black River, Saunders Beach, Bluewater, Toomulla Beach, Rollingstone and Paluma. It is an award-winning festival that really builds and connects communities in this area of Thuringowa. I have been involved in this committee for a few years now, and the festival is again shaping up to deliver a quality program to the people of the northern beaches area.

These changes to the legislation will assist incorporated associations, and I welcome them as anything that helps the volunteers in our community is a good thing. With those few comments on the record, I commend the bill to the House.