



House of Assembly

Extract from Hansard

Thursday 23 June 2016

Page 6206

Justices of the Peace (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light)
(15:53):**

I would like to make a small contribution to this debate in support of this bill. I note that the objective of this bill is 'to provide for a more efficient mechanism for the appointment, suspension and removal of a justice or special justices of the peace from office'.

I support that endeavour.

Our justices of the peace play a very important role in the community.

Making their life easier by cutting some of the red tape obviously would assist them,

and it would also assist with the appointment.

Often, appointments can take quite a while. This is not a criticism of the current process, nor is it a criticism of the Governor, but they do take a while. The rigorous processes you need to vet applicants to make sure that people are of appropriate character, etc., are appointed, I can understand fully, but it has not been unusual in the past to take from six to nine months to appoint somebody.

It is actually easier to appoint a chief justice of the Supreme Court than a justice of the peace sometimes. Anything that can reduce red tape and make the lives of applicants easier is welcome.

We have to remember that justices of the peace serve in a voluntary capacity. They are volunteers, like many other volunteers in our community. If there is one grievance you hear from volunteers these days, and I am sure every member hears this, it is about the additional red tape and bureaucracy involved in just being a simple volunteer and all the hurdles you have to jump over to volunteer in your community, whether you are cooking a sausage sizzle at your local footy club or volunteering in other areas.

Some of those checks and balances that we have in our systems are very important. When people are dealing with

children, obviously police checks are important.

But I think sometimes we do not risk manage the process that well. We are more risk averse than risk managing.

That said, this bill seeks to reduce the level of bureaucracy and the level of red tape and that is to be welcomed. To give you an indication of how important JPs are in our community, we have a JP Service in our electoral office, as most MPs would. Over the last 10 days, for example, we have had 117 people come into our office and we have signed and witnessed over 225 different requests.

I am fortunate in that I have been able to recruit a lot of JPs who actually sit in our office, which means that my staff can actually do all the other work. We have a roster and, with the exception of one afternoon, we have an additional JP in the office doing JP work and they are run off their feet. They play an important role and I would like to personally thank the JPs who work through my office because it does release my staff to do other important work in the electorate.

To get a better idea of the work done by JPs, I am a member, as are others, of the Barossa and District Justices Group.

This is one of the sub-associations of the royal association and this association works with JPs.

They meet regularly and also provide training. Just to put it in context, this particular group, the Barossa and Districts Justices Group spans a large area from Gawler to Eudunda and surrounding areas. They hold regular meetings, comprising training and development, throughout the district. They meet anywhere from Gawler to the Barossa, from Angaston to Tanunda and Eudunda, etc.

If I recall correctly, their AGM was held only last week, and the current executive committee comprises the following members. The Chairman is Mr Chris Johnstone OAM, JP from Nuriootpa. The Vice-Chairman is Mrs Jacqueline Raphael JP, who just lives around the corner from my house in the wonderful suburb of Kudla. The Secretary of the association is Mr Colin Drew from Gawler and he is also the coordinator of the Gawler group.

The Treasurer is Mrs Margaret Buckley JP from Nuriootpa. Publicity and reports are the responsibility of Mrs Maxine Chenoweth from Gawler River. The immediate past chairman is Mr Robert Brookes from Lyndoch. The Nuriootpa JP Service Room Coordinator is Mr Peter Flaherty and, as I mentioned, Colin Drew looks after the Gawler area.

This group was formed on Friday 17 October 1980 with the inaugural chairman being the late Mr Cyril Cockshell JP from Gawler. I knew him quite

well and I continue to know his family. The towns currently covered by the group are Robertstown, Eudunda, Nuriootpa, Angaston, Freeling, Roseworthy, Lyndoch, Williamstown, Kapunda, Gawler and Evanston.

Half of those are in my electorate and half are in the electorate of Schubert.

There are town representatives from the local towns, representing their communities and encouraging their JPs to join the Barossa group and organise regular meetings in their areas. This has proved a very successful venture since the group was formed over 35 years ago.

Currently, the Barossa and District Justice Group consists of 65 members. The JP Service Room (the name was changed just recently from the Library Daily Room) was set up originally in the library at Nuriootpa along with a service in Gawler.

The JPs actually have a service that they provide through the council libraries and they provide a couple of hours in the town of Gawler. As most of us would know, when people want a JP they want a JP then and there; they do not want to have to wait three or four days until the service is available. That is why officers like our own officers are regularly visited by people for JP work.

Both JP service rooms are used by the local community on a

regular basis, with local JPs on a roster system attending on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Regular professional development training is conducted to keep member JPs current on documentation and regulations requiring JP services in the community.

I recall reading one of this group's recent newsletters which stated they actually had a training session on advanced care directives. There is a bit of controversy about that documentation. I have certainly written to the health minister and Attorney-General, as others probably have, about these directives. I am not sure whether that controversy has been sorted out yet.

The Hon. S.W. Key interjecting:

The Hon. A. PICCOLO: The member for Ashford indicates that, no, it has not been.

This group has granted life memberships to show appreciation for a number of JPs in the community. Life membership has been granted to the late Cyril Cockshell JP, being the original recipient of the award. Some of the other recipients have been Dr Bruce Eastick AM JP, who would be known to people in this chamber. Dr Eastick was leader of the Liberal opposition in the mid 1970s—I think from 1977-79—the member for Light for over 23 years, and former mayor of the Town of Gawler on two occasions.

Mrs Margaret Raggat JP has also been granted life membership, as has Mr Clive LePage JP. If my memory serves me correctly, Clive was also the CEO of the former district council of Angaston, where he served with distinction. Mr David Lilliecrap OAM JP, whom I know quite well, and Mrs Maxine Chenoweth JP have also been granted life membership.

The latest member to join the group is Mrs Jenny Dowling from Two Wells, who was secretary of the new recessed lower north JP group.

I would just like to emphasise that JPs play an important role, and one which is not often well understood in the community.

People who come in to have a document witnessed will often ask the JP for advice on whether the form is completed correctly, etc.

The JP will usually say, 'We are just here to make sure that you know what you are signing and what you are saying is truthful.'

We often have to decline providing advice to the person who wants a document signed.

Having said that, JPs do go out of their way to assist and will direct people to other documentation, such as those provided by the Legal Services Commission or other fact sheets, to help them through the process.

With those few comments, I support this bill, and again

acknowledge the very important role that JPs play in our community.