



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 25 May 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt— ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (9.57 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to be able to inform the House of a significant initiative in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board has now been established. The new board will be the Queensland Government's peak advisory body on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy. Its creation marks the start of another partnership between the Government and Queenslanders and further empowerment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in particular.

One of my principal objectives in creating the board was to bring together the representatives of the various specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies now giving advice to the State Government. This will lead to better coordination of advice on major policy issues. The Aboriginal Coordinating Council and the Island Coordinating Council will be joined by specialist bodies that liaise with the Government on health, education, housing and infrastructure, vocational education and training, and the State Reconciliation Council.

The new body brings together an impressive array of talent and experience with credentials in a wide range of issues. It will be ably chaired by a respected elder, Mr Robert Anderson, who heads the State Reconciliation Committee and is well known for his service on other Government bodies and various community organisations. Mr Anderson has a deserved reputation for being fair, reasonable and wise and I am confident he will lead the board with distinction. It gives me a great deal of satisfaction to inform the House that six of the 12 members of the board are women.

The terms of reference of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board allow it to advise the State Government on development and implementation of policies that affect the lives of indigenous Queenslanders. It will advise on matters such as broad spending priorities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs; implementation of recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; efficiency and effectiveness of Queensland Government programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; advancing reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; Commonwealth/State relations in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs; and any other issues that may be determined by myself as Minister.

The new board will, of course, replace the former Indigenous Advisory Council. I need to acknowledge the work of the dedicated people on that committee and note that the need for change arose from structural problems with the old committee, not with its membership. The Indigenous Advisory Council could not operate as a peak advisory committee, because it did not include the people who were providing advice to Government on key issues such as health, education, housing, training and reconciliation. The new board also has community representatives chosen through an expressions of interest process.

I am confident that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board will make a significant contribution to policy development and implementation. In closing, I want again to pay tribute to the former Chair of the Indigenous Advisory Council, Mr Neville Bonner. His physical presence has left us but his contribution will never be forgotten.