



Speech by

PETER WELLINGTON

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

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VISIT TO MOUNT ISA, MORNINGTON ISLAND AND DOOMADGEE

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (7.01 p.m.): My wife and I recently accepted an invitation from the member for Mount Isa and Minister for Mines and Energy to visit his electorate on a two and a half day fact-finding mission. In Mount Isa, we went on a four-hour inspection of the Enterprise mine with the manager and the engineer. We travelled 1.8 kilometres below the surface to inspect the shaft, which will bring iron ore to the surface. The shaft will cut the time that it takes to bring ore to the surface, ultimately reducing the cost of producing copper. I have the utmost admiration for those who work underground; it certainly is no picnic.

The next day we flew to Mornington Island, where we talked with members of the island council. We inspected the hospital and police station, visited the school and spoke to several Aboriginal elders. Local councillors told us that there had been two suicides there that week and that youth suicide was a major problem. I addressed the council and listened to some of their concerns. One councillor asked for Government funding to establish a refuge for young men away from the town. That woman has lost two sons to suicide and said that she would like to limit the community's access to alcohol. We spoke privately to an Aboriginal elder who said that the island's Aboriginal children were far less literate than people of her generation. She also said that many women would prefer to stay on the island to have their babies. She was very concerned about the suicide rate and about its linkage to alcohol abuse.

In the afternoon, we flew to the Doomadgee Aboriginal settlement, where we again inspected the hospital and school, spoke to police and met with a group of Aboriginal women. The hospital has excellent facilities. We met with a group of women there who highlighted to me some of the fundamental problems in their community. Again, it appeared that alcohol abuse played a pivotal role. On the Friday morning, we visited an Aboriginal refuge in Mount Isa which is run by a dedicated and caring couple.

The brief visit covered a lot of ground and gave me a much greater insight into the problems of the mining industry and of those living in isolated communities. I thank the Minister for Mines and Energy most sincerely for that opportunity and the experience.
