



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGE

Hansard 8 November 2000

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Torres Strait District Framework Agreement on Education and Vocational Education

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumbidgee—ALP) (Minister for Education) (10.06 a.m.), by leave: Last week, I visited the Torres Strait to sign the Torres Strait District Framework Agreement on Education and Vocational Education. This agreement gives Torres Strait Islanders more say in the education of their children and better vocational education and training opportunities. It is, therefore, both symbolic and practical.

The agreement commits everyone in the Torres Strait to improving educational outcomes and to ongoing discussion, consultation and negotiation about decision making and policy determination. The agreement calls on all of us to work to: improve attendance and completion rates; retain the cultural values of these communities; change the way we work together; modify how we staff our schools; commit to agreed targets; and to share the rights and responsibilities of decision making and policy determination.

This fits perfectly with our 2010 strategy for State Education. It is part of our strategy for the continuous improvement of education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, called Partners for Success. We now recognise that schools and their communities are best placed to tackle those obstacles that history and society have misguidedly placed in the way of educational success. On paper the life of the agreement is four years. In reality, we view it as a long-term commitment.

The agreement was a landmark in the history of education in the region. It was an achievement that has been vigorously advocated by the local member, the honourable Minister for Transport. I signed it, together with a representative of my colleague the Honourable Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, in the presence of the Kaurareg traditional owners of the land, elders and other community members.

The other signatories were the Torres Strait Islanders Regional Education Council—TSIREC, the Torres Strait Regional Authority, the Island Coordinating Council and the Torres Shire Council. Education in these communities is no longer a bureaucratically imposed affair. These communities have always taken a strong and active interest in their children's education, and this agreement gives institutional recognition to that cultural fact. I note the presence at that ceremony of community leaders, including Mr Ephraim Bani, Father Dolton Bon, Mrs Enid Tom, Mr Terry Waia, Mr Henry Garnier, Cr Pedro Stephen, Mr Dale Anderson and Mr Ned David.
