



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sports and Cultural Festival; Cape York Justice Study

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (10.06 a.m.), by leave: On Saturday, I attended the eighth annual Sports and Cultural Festival, which is now recognised as the largest indigenous organised sporting and cultural event in Australia. Over two days about 10,000 people from Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria joined in the festivities at Whites Hill. They played touch football, sang, danced, made new friends and renewed old acquaintances—all in an alcohol-free zone. Some 85 of the 90 teams were indigenous and travelled from as far afield as Yarrabah and Shepparton in Victoria. Having attended almost every one of these festivals, I continue to be impressed by the family atmosphere, sporting excellence, cultural inclusion and culinary delights on offer. Robbie Williams of First Contact started—and continues to manage—this festival. He deserves our congratulations for organising an event that consistently celebrates the successes of indigenous people.

As the Premier has already stated, I will be leaving for Cape York Peninsula this afternoon to discuss an issue of critical importance to indigenous Queenslanders—the Cape York Justice Study. Later today I will visit Kowanyama to join a consultation team of government and non-government people. Yesterday this team started a three-month consultation circuit in Pormpuraaw, and this morning it is opening discussions with the Kowanyama community. Tomorrow we plan to visit Napranum and Mapoon and on Thursday we will meet with people from Bamaga and other northern peninsula communities at the very tip of the cape. The aim of these visits is to ensure that people who live out their lives documented by Justice Fitzgerald have an opportunity to discuss his recommendations with the government. We will distribute a condensed version of his recommendations and hear and consider the views of grassroots people. Their responses will feed into the government's response to the study and will in this way be considered by cabinet before we make a final decision about implementation.

The people of the cape are as diverse and individual as the people of any land mass of this size—as large as the entire state of Victoria—and I have no doubt that we will receive varied and robust comments about the justice study. The consultations will continue until February and will include communities in other parts of Queensland, because some of Justice Fitzgerald's recommendations are relevant and applicable to communities outside the cape. I have also had discussions with the chair of ATSIC, Mr Geoff Clark, about the study. He has confirmed that ATSIC is keen to play a role in the consultation process.

While readers of the study are struck by the perils of community life, Justice Fitzgerald is careful to point out that these communities are also home to gifted and hardworking people, loving families and beautiful children. In my role as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy I have the opportunity of meeting such from all over Queensland. I get to know countless indigenous people who are achievers—in business, the arts, sports, academic and community endeavours. Many Queenslanders do not have the good fortune to meet and befriend indigenous Queenslanders and hear only the bad news about indigenous communities. It is my hope that this consultation process will enable the skills of indigenous people to come to the fore and will produce more good news stories about people overcoming the odds to build safe, functional communities on Cape York.
