



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 13 December 2001

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Indigenous Families, Protection Against Violence

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (10.05 a.m.), by leave: It is no secret that in the past three years indigenous family violence prevention has become a key priority for this government. In fact, no Queensland government has been more determined to take action on this issue. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence report, media articles, identities like Noel Pearson, countless conversations with indigenous community members, and now the Cape York Justice Study have sharpened our focus on this issue. Again and again we are hearing, and acknowledging, that generations will be wasted unless we halt the rampant alcohol abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Any suggestions that we have ignored the recommendations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence are mischievous. We will continue to implement recommendations from the women and to act in the spirit of their report. Some women on that task force placed their own safety on the line in order to present government with an honest picture of life in their communities.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board is overseeing the government's response to the report. Last month the board hosted a forum in Townsville as part of the response to the report. The key purpose of the forum, attended by about 100 people, was to discuss the terms of a family violence prevention agreement. The agreement would be along the lines of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement, which set the goal of halving indigenous incarceration rates by 2011.

The forum was productive, and I am heartened by the board's commitment to continue working with the government, and to deliver a Family Violence Prevention Agreement by mid-2002. I envisage that the agreement, along with the Cape York Justice Study, will give us concrete goals and a framework for making indigenous communities safer and more harmonious places for all citizens, women and especially children. It will help us build on the work of the past three years, which includes more than doubling specific funding for indigenous family violence prevention; increasing Department of Families' support for indigenous women and children escaping domestic violence to almost one-third of the total budget for women and children fleeing violence; awarding 100 per cent of our Domestic Violence Prevention Week awards funding to indigenous organisations this year; earmarking \$2.25 million over the next three years for healing centres in indigenous communities; completing three shelters in remote communities—Lockhart River on Cape York, Thursday Island in Torres Strait and Palm Island near Townsville—bringing a shelter at Napranum close to completion and starting work on a shelter at Doomadgee, while plans are on the drawing board for seven other communities; employing five indigenous licensing officers throughout the state, clamping down on sly grog; and developing community-driven alcohol management plans.

We have been working hard, but we have not yet done enough. Justice Fitzgerald's Cape York Justice Study has built on the endeavours that have gone before. His recommendations knit with many recommendations from the indigenous women. Justice Fitzgerald has reinforced the message to government that radical action in this sensitive area is not only permissible, it is necessary. This government is determined to use the recommendations of both valuable studies to take that action.