



Speech by

**DESLEY SCOTT**

**MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE**

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Hansard 17 September 2002

**COMMUNITY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL  
INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES LIQUOR LICENCES BILL**

**Mrs DESLEY SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (9.22 p.m.): The legacy of white settlement in Australia to the original inhabitants is one that fills many of us with sadness and untold pain. We are filled with a sense of loss as we view what has happened to a once proud people who inhabited and cared for this land. Many have lost their sense of dignity and culture and have had their lives destroyed by alcohol and drugs, not to mention many diseases that formerly were unknown in this country. Our modern society has robbed many of their true sense of identity, their cultural law, their dreaming and stories, their cultural food and way of life.

Australia is not alone in this. All over the world we see indigenous cultures swamped by the modern world and there have been so many negative effects on all of these people. It is incredible that it has taken such a long time for the full realisation of the harm done to our Aboriginal brothers and sisters to become widely known and acknowledged. The stolen generation is still with us. Many are still relatively young people. It is very recent history. So we are looking at a start to what may be a very long road back for many of these people.

I can happily report that in my electorate of Woodridge I have many very fine indigenous people—men, women, young people and children who have rediscovered their heritage and who are proud of their Aboriginality. It is celebrated. Schools in my electorate are encouraging Aboriginal elders and parents to help restore the culture within the hearts of students. Our AASPA committees are working well and new partnerships with community groups, schools and churches are now being formed.

Recently, I enjoyed an evening of storytelling at Woodridge High School, with Aboriginal elders sharing their dreaming around camp fires. We ate together and enjoyed some traditional dancing. It was a great evening. We are very proud to have an Aboriginal school captain at Woodridge—Jack Brunker—who is a great role model for the students and the wider community. I applaud the work of community leaders such as Reg Knox and his daughter, Missy, who have inspired so many of our young students in our schools; Martin Wattego and his extended family, who over many years have given so much to our community; and Celia Moore and many other wonderful Aboriginal women whose company I enjoy so much. They have encouraged many of our young people in their sporting endeavours. Faith Green and her family are involved with students and run a church program for young people. Albert and Nancy Bowie have widely distributed Aboriginal cultural items and arts and crafts and encouraged students to feel pride in who they are. Neville McKenzie and his family bring a lot of interest to our festivals with their music and Aboriginal dance as well as beautiful arts and crafts. Barry of our multicultural centre is a regular at our schools and functions. A number of local Aboriginal groups spend a great deal of time forging positive links within our community, and I thank them all.

However, there is one Aboriginal elder whose friendship I have valued for perhaps close to 20 years, from whom I have learned much, who I respect greatly and who has helped me to gain a little understanding of the difficulties faced by his people in our western society. Paddy Jerome was raised for the first five years of his life as a traditional Aboriginal. At his grandmother's knee, he learned his traditional language, tribal culture, tribal law and dreaming. It was here that he gained his true identity.

But then he was taken away to attend school on a mission and learned up to grade 4 level, when he was then sent out to work. He learned to drink and for many years conformed to what he now says is the negative image created by our society. He was violent and angry.

It was many years later in Sydney when a Catholic priest, Father Ted Kennedy, took Paddy in and explained to him how he had been corrupted by white man's culture, conforming to the pressures of society. Deep inside, his Aboriginal nature told him that it was wrong. This was the start of what was to become for Paddy a lifelong work to restore his people. He started the Catholic Council, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Alcohol Services, Dundulli Youth Services, and the 139 Club for homeless people in the Valley. One of Paddy's reformed alcoholics is now a minister in the Uniting Church, himself now rescuing others. For many years, Paddy has been chaplain to our Aboriginal men in our prison system. But he now believes that there is a far deeper underlying problem that we must address if we are to see these people gain their self-respect and culture. He strongly believes that the violence, drinking, youth suicide and all of the negative aspects in the lives of many Aboriginal people are all linked. They have lost their culture, their self-respect and their social image. When passing us in the street many Aboriginals will have a negative image and we may feel that there is something wrong with them. They are conforming to general society expectations. In 1975 Paddy conducted a survey and found that 75 per cent of whites had a negative image of Aboriginals. However, the sad fact was that, in a similar number of Aboriginals surveyed, 50 per cent of their community also had a negative image of their own people, a very sad commentary indeed. They had internalised such self-hatred and hopelessness that suicide was often the end result or their hatred was directed towards family members in their drunken state of mind. According to Paddy, this is real psychological warfare and happens to all cultures. He cited Julius Caesar as the father of this warfare when 2,000 years ago he used it to minimise the potential for revolution of a captive nation. Within Aboriginal culture, the psychological addiction is far stronger than the physical addiction where they are conforming to a social expectation.

Paddy stopped drinking 30 years ago and many have wondered about this man, but when you look inside you see that the hurt has been too great at seeing his people destroyed. Paddy now has a new dream. He wishes to reach a new generation, to enable young people to own their ethics and moral behaviour which has almost been lost. He wishes to see a cultural rebirth. His dream centres on a significant sacred site on the Darling Downs where he hopes to restore the land and set up a cultural centre where young people can come to learn of their heritage and culture and feel pride in who they are. He wants to see the healing and restoration of the Aboriginal sense of values and believes that the negatives will drop away. I know that Minister Matt Foley has been briefed on his plans and that he has the backing of the Toowoomba City Council and Cobb & Co museum and significant assistance from Professor Bill Wilkie, who has a very strong interest in Aboriginal culture and language and has been initiated into Paddy's tribe.

The legislation we are debating today gives a framework for empowering these communities. It is no longer acceptable for white men to paternalistically make decisions that affect the lives of people on these communities. It is far preferable that the communities make these decisions, and many will be tough decisions. The reports have shown unacceptable levels of alcohol abuse and violence, incarceration, poor health, unemployment, suicide and early death. No-one in a remote Aboriginal community would be untouched in some way or other. This will enable the community justice groups to declare dry areas where alcohol is not permitted, to decide when and how alcohol will be sold, to give advice to the courts on sentencing and mediation, to institute measures to control and limit the sly grog trade and, most importantly, to break the councils' hold over liquor establishments from where much of their funding has come in the past.

The legislation contains very high fines for sly grogging and tough sanctions for these dealers in misery. Both state and indigenous community police will be given powers to seize property and vehicles and will also be able to destroy small amounts of liquor. These measures in themselves will not restore the self-worth, high esteem and cultural values needed for our indigenous people to regain their true image and culture. I am very heartened to see that in *Meeting challenges, making choices* our government has a number of initiatives which will go hand in hand with the more difficult measures of regulating liquor outlets and reducing violence and crime, offering support to children and families, improving health, education and training, fostering economic development and, very importantly, encouraging the elders to keep their culture and language alive by passing on traditional arts, crafts, dance and teachings to the younger generation. This will truly restore pride and a great sense of hope for the future. It is in the young generation that we hope this pride will be restored. In the words of Paddy as I left him last week, without this underlying pride of self it will fail.

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