



Speech by

Hon. Liddy Clark

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Hansard Tuesday, 18 May 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Longreach Cattle Drive

Hon. E.A. CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (10.08 a.m.): It is sometimes easy to feel a long way away from Queensland's history of stock routes and droving. But in the central west, one alliance is teaching these very Australian skills—and more—to 36 young Aboriginal people. The first group of 12 of these young people have already set off on their journey on horseback under the guidance of boss drover Pic Willetts. They will take about 1,220 head of cattle from Julia Creek to Longreach working in three different teams of 12. I know that the member for Mount Isa, Tony McGrady, joins me in applauding this wonderful initiative.

This journey will not only increase the job opportunities for these young people; it will provide them with an adventure to remember.

Mr Johnson: I'll take delivery of them when they get to Longreach.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: Yes. It will be great.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Ms LIDDY CLARK: This journey will take these young stockmen far beyond their final destination of Longreach. This project comes from an alliance of three Aboriginal owned cattle stations in the Mount Isa and Normanton areas—the Kalkadoon Tribal Council's Calton Hills station, the Morr Morr Pastoral Company's Delta Downs at Normanton, and the Riversleigh and Lawn Hill stations north of Mount Isa. Each station in the Lower Gulf Indigenous Beef Alliance has contributed cattle which will be sold following the six-week journey at public auction in Longreach on 26 June.

I would like to congratulate all involved in this project, including organiser Boyd Curran, who says the idea followed the huge interest shown in traineeships offered for the past three years by the Riversleigh and Lawn Hill stations. I might add that two young women have taken up these traineeships for the first time this year. Boyd Curran says there were many, many more applicants than traineeships and the three stations decided that it was time to share their knowledge of the cattle industry and stock work more widely.

This is the first time this droving trip from Julia Creek to Longreach has been held and the stations are hoping it will become an annual event. The journey has been organised through the work and support of groups and individuals including the tireless and inspirational Father Mick Lowcock and Centacare Employment. It has attracted the interest of people who can make a difference to these young people's lives. They have gone through health checks, and have had a two-day induction course and a further two-day horsemanship course even before they set off. But this is not just about getting on a horse. These young people will be outfitted and instructed, they will learn further numeracy and literacy skills, health awareness, and face challenges, and they will receive job finding skills training at the end of it all.

The alliance has also started a trust fund to provide scholarships for young Aboriginal people to gain further education. I applaud this independent and imaginative initiative which has used Queensland traditions to help give kids a future in this state.