



Speech by

Hon. Liddy Clark

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Hansard Wednesday, 18 August 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Alcohol Management Plans

Hon. E.A. CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (10.15 a.m.): From time to time we hear stories that the alcohol management plans in place in 17 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are causing people to move out of their communities. There are stories that people with substance abuse problems are moving to neighbouring towns and cities, and there are claims that this is shifting the issues of drunkenness and homelessness from one place to another. Surveys done by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy in north Queensland and far-north Queensland show that there is no link between the introduction of alcohol management plans and the migration of people from indigenous communities. A survey in Cairns looked at where homeless people had come from and how long they had lived in Cairns. At the time of the survey, alcohol management plans were already in place in Aurukun, Napranum, Lockhart River and Wujal Wujal. The results were close to identical to a survey completed well before the plans were introduced.

Some 22 of the 68 people who completed surveys were from Lockhart River. One was from Aurukun and four were from Napranum. This is in line with a historical trend of homeless people in Cairns. The year before, 22 of the 74 homeless people surveyed in Cairns were from Lockhart River. So, in effect, the place of origin had not changed despite the introduction of alcohol restrictions. Information gathered by the tireless and committed workers at the street based outreach workers in Cairns also indicates the alcohol management plans are not strong factors in people's decision to come to Cairns. In Townsville, a survey completed a few months ago found 62.5 per cent of homeless respondents had lived in Townsville for longer than 10 years. Only five had lived there for less than 12 months. More than 70 per cent of people came from Palm Island, where there is no alcohol management plan in place.

A survey to gauge any changes in the homelessness profile in Mount Isa is planned in conjunction with police for next month. However, anecdotal evidence gathered by DATSIP's west Queensland regional office also shows that there is no causal link between population displacement and alcohol restrictions. The reviews to be carried out a year after the implementation of each of the community's plans will also investigate any link between the plans and migration. I have visited and spoken to many people in many communities where alcohol restrictions are in place. The plans are continuing to make a difference. There are fewer offences against the person and fewer assault presentations and alcohol related presentations at the health clinics. We are committed to assisting the communities to continue this important work.