



Speech by

Hon. Liddy Clark

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Hansard Thursday, 19 August 2004

APPROPRIATION BILLS; ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Hon. E.A. CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (12.33 p.m.): Before I begin, I would like to table a non-conforming petition. I would like to thank the members of Estimates Committee D for their efforts. The estimates process is an excellent opportunity for an in-depth look at the work of every portfolio. I was particularly satisfied to see that the committee was as pleased as I am with the progress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy as a stand-alone portfolio. The committee tabled no statement of reservations. However, at this stage I would like to acknowledge the statements made by the member for Gregory. I have taken on board everything that he said and I would also like to thank him for his support.

The fact that there is no statement of reservation is obviously recognition of the fact that the portfolio is turning its attention to where it is needed the most. We are shifting the focus of this department from service delivery to policy and a whole-of-government coordination. The issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders are far wider than can be encompassed in one portfolio. Issues in remote, rural regional and urban areas cover everything from housing to health and employment to education. That is why those needs are best dealt with by the experts.

The 2004-05 Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy core budget is \$54.7 million. Our role is to take a strategic look at what is being provided—what services, strategies and policies are already in place—and ensure that they work together to deliver the best results. We have learned from the past and we are working with all the bodies and the many people involved to work towards a strong future. Partnerships Queensland will be the integrated framework to achieve this vision. This framework is currently being developed and will tie in the very important strategies already making changes in Queensland. These include the state government's long-term planning framework—the 10-year partnership—and Meeting Challenges, Making Choices, the Queensland government's response to the Cape York Justice Study.

The estimates committee was updated on some of the many moves that this department and this government is making in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure that indigenous people have the same opportunities as all other Queenslanders. These programs include everything from developing and implementing alcohol management plans where they are needed the most to funding for cultural celebrations. I informed the committee of the many measures in place to support the communities where alcohol management plans are in place, the work of the 44 community justice groups around the state, and the work of the government champions and the negotiation tables.

The Cape York Strategy Unit, which is funded by this department, is another key government area. The unit plays an important role in facilitating and promoting relationships between Queensland and Australian government officers as well as between the government and the community. This unit, which has about 10 officers from both the state and federal governments, demonstrates the ways in which we are working together to build a united approach to program development and service delivery between the community and the government.

This portfolio makes every aspect of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander people's lives its business, but it is taking the long-term approach that is needed to find ongoing solutions to historical problems. It is time to make a difference. Again, I thank the members of Estimates Committee D for their involvement and I thank the staff of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy for their work in preparing for estimates and for their commitment to our vision.