



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 18 March 2004

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Indigenous Communities, Cape York

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.23 a.m.): We are righting wrongs, and we offer a brighter future for the indigenous communities in Cape York. Our alcohol management plans in indigenous communities are tough, but if we are to make life better, if we are to reduce the incidence of babies with foetal alcohol syndrome or if we are to reduce assaults and bashing, especially on women, we must change. Today I can report that, from the implementation of alcohol bans across cape communities, school attendance rates are generally showing a wonderful improvement. For example, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy says that at Pormpuraaw, school attendance rates have improved from 63 per cent in term 4 2002 to 88 per cent in term 4 2003. At Aurukun they have improved from 38 per cent in term 4 2002 to 50 per cent in term 4 2003. At Kowanyama they have improved from 68 per cent in term 4 2002 to 71 per cent in term 4 2003. In Lockhart River, school attendances averaged about 50 per cent for most of term 4 in 2003. According to Acting School Principal, Ken Schaumberg, in the first five weeks of 2004, attendances have been as high as 91 per cent and averaging above 76 per cent or better. A year ago they were in decline. A year ago there was no future.

DATSIP says that in Lockhart River there has been a 50 per cent reduction in average monthly offences against the person and a 90 per cent reduction in average monthly new assault presentations to the community health centre. These are a good start. However, we recognise that maintaining these early results will be a challenge. But meet the challenge we will. Taking action to reduce the harm from alcohol abuse remains our highest priority. These restrictions must stay in place for as long as it takes to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of these Queensland children and families. These Queenslanders are just as entitled to the government's support as anyone else, and we are not going to leave them behind. Tony Fitzgerald gave us three years. We tabled our response to him in April 2002 and we ended up with bipartisan support at that time to help the women and children of Cape York. We have 12 months to complete this program and then we will review it.