



Speech by

Hon. Judy Spence

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard Wednesday, 21 February 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aboriginal Policing

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (10.18 am): There has been much attention lately on policing in Aboriginal communities and the related issue of violence in these communities. Last week I travelled to the Cape York Aboriginal communities to meet with police and community members. I went to Lockhart River, Bamaga, Aurukun, Pormpuraaw, Kowanyama and Thursday Island. I met with police and spoke to officers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about policing matters and what they see as their needs.

Coincidentally, at the same time the Senate estimates committee hearings in Canberra were hearing that not a single cent has been spent from the first allocation of moneys for Indigenous policing, as promised by Mal Brough at his National Indigenous Summit in Canberra last year. The Howard government is quick to criticise the states for poor service delivery, but this failure to spend any of Mal Brough's promised \$40 million is a very good example of its inability to deliver services or infrastructure in an area which it sees as a high priority. All along I suspected Mal Brough was using the critical issue of violence in Aboriginal communities to suit his own political agenda.

We said that the priorities that the Commonwealth could help us with were: a plan for policing in the Torres Strait, a police station on Badu Island, funding towards police housing in Aboriginal communities so that we can increase police numbers in those communities and help with watch-house upgrades in Aboriginal communities.

The Beattie government has a good track record of building police stations in Indigenous communities, such as those built in the last few years in Hope Vale and Palm Island. We are also delivering new police housing at places like Aurukun and Kowanyama. We have funded police stations in all but one Aboriginal community in this state and that is the new community of Old Mapoon.

We are told by the federal government that it does not want to spend any of its money in the Torres Strait, that it only wants to spend money in Aboriginal communities. The Torres Strait is being ignored by the Commonwealth. If the federal government is fair dinkum when it offers its assistance, it will listen to Queensland's request because we understand our policing requirements.

The other strong message I received from my Cape York trip is that the alcohol restrictions are working. Those communities do not want to see the government wind back on those restrictions. I applaud Aurukun mayor, Neville Pootchemunka. On Monday in the *Cairns Post* he called for less alcohol to be served at the Aurukun Tavern. He is quoted as saying—

I think all this is related to the alcohol being brought into the community. The amount they are drinking is too much. It is probably 18 cans being given to patrons down at the tavern.

Like many of us, he believes that alcohol restrictions will reduce the violence in that community.