



Speech by


Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Wednesday, 11 May 2011

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Strategy

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.24 am): A draft Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice strategy is now available for public consultation. It is an important strategy that addresses the underlying causes of why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are around 12 times more likely to be in prison than non-Indigenous people and why there are more offenders and more victims of domestic and family violence. As a government, we are working hard to turn those statistics around. We have rolled out a range of reforms—cell visitor schemes, diversion centres, sobering up and counselling services, upgrades of watch-houses and community based justice initiatives, such as night patrols.

The evidence was laid out on the table 20 years ago by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. It was a significant milestone in our nation's history and it remains as relevant today. Back then, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not asking us to dwell on the awful consequences of those misguided and misdirected policies. Instead, they were asking us to make practical responses and to work with them to undo the damage that sits on their shoulders each and every day. The recommendations that were implemented were a necessary first step in demonstrating a maturity and a willingness to move forward in a partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is more work to be done through this partnership.

Our draft justice strategy stands on four pillars of reform that wrap around policies that are fair, culturally aware and responsive to the justice needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today—policies that we hope will stand up to the scrutiny of future generations. These policies include: community safety plans in Cairns, Townsville, Mount Isa, Rockhampton and Brisbane; getting in early, which involves engaging with children and young people and encouraging healthy and active lifestyles and educational opportunities that will set them on the right path; turnaround teams to tackle school attendance; and creating training and employment opportunities, which means getting 'at risk' kids into jobs, and striking up partnerships with mining, construction and tourism companies.

It is about getting back to basics and looking at the underlying causes of crime—and they are issues that relate to poverty, alcohol and drug misuse, employment, health, housing and education. We remain determined, as a government, to continue to provide practical responses and to come up with sensible and workable solutions to meet the justice needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I encourage all Queenslanders to have their say on our draft strategy before the end of the month. It is an opportunity to help shape the four pillars and to bring about real and tangible reforms that will, in turn, help close the gap on disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.