



Speech by


Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Thursday, 17 November 2011

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cape York Welfare Trial

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (9.50 am): The Bligh government is working hard to put remote Indigenous communities on track for a brighter future through the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial. The Family Responsibilities Commission is a key plank of this trial, which is ongoing in the Indigenous communities of Aurukun, Hope Vale, Coen and Mossman Gorge.

I am pleased to report to the House that the commission's annual report for 2010-11 reveals some encouraging results in these communities. I can report that there has been a near doubling of school attendance in Aurukun since the trial commenced in 2008. School attendance in Aurukun at the start of the trial stood at 37.9 per cent, but by the first term of 2011 it had risen to 73.9 per cent. This increase is a result of the combined efforts of the commission and school attendance case managers to drive down truancy rates. It is an example of how the commission has acted quickly in response to an emerging local issue and helped put local children on track for a life of learning.

The annual report shows that over the past 12 months the commission has held 1,745 conferences with community members in the four communities. Some of these hearings are conducted in the local dialect, helping to preserve local culture and tradition while ensuring people understand their responsibilities to their children.

The Cape York Welfare Reform trial is a partnership between the Australian and Queensland governments, the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership and the four communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. It represents a valuable chance to create an enduring legacy for the future of these communities. There is no doubt that the trial is already delivering real improvements and our challenge now is to ensure that these improvements continue. That is why we have extended the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial to the end of 2012. We recognise there is more work to be done in these communities. We will continue to work with elders, commissioners and residents to ensure lasting improvements in these communities in education, child safety and general community wellbeing. We are working to deliver a brighter future for Indigenous Queenslanders in the cape, and that work will continue.