




Speech by

Hon. Glen Elmes

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard Thursday, 1 November 2012

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. GW ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier) (4.36 pm), in reply: At the outset I thank all honourable members who have taken part in this short debate this afternoon to extend the trial of the Family Responsibilities Commission. I believe—and I will come back to this later—that if there is one thing we can agree on in this parliament it should be the future and our unqualified support of the first Australians of this country, and I think today has been a pretty good start.

When one looks at the bill one sees that we are only really here to decide on three things. One is to change the expiry date of this new trial period until 1 January 2014. We are also extending the tenure of the existing commissioners. I note that both the members for Mulgrave and Woodridge also touched on the fact that the bill now stipulates that a quorum can now be met by two members. One of the things that we have done as part of this reform is set up the board as an advisory board. That necessitated some changes because of a new stand-alone department, so the director-general of my department, Debbie Best, will be the chair of the new board. I have already mentioned that four new board members will be appointed, one representing each of the communities involved—in addition to the existing people. So far as the quorum is concerned, they will discuss what is important and the projects that they have on board and they will as an advisory board come to me to put those things through. I also assure members that a full and complete record of all of the proceedings is kept so that there is transparency. My director-general will do a very good job in that regard.

It has been an unusual day in the Queensland parliament today, particularly from the point of view of Indigenous affairs. This morning we started with a condolence motion for Eric Deeral. A little bit later we unveiled a plaque to make sure that his contribution to the Queensland parliament will not be forgotten. It was great to see his family and relatives in the gallery today and that they were able to come down and take part in what was a very significant event. Also today I had David and Christine Hart as my guests. People would remember Pro Hart. David is his son, and he donated a mural called the *Australian Mural* to this parliament. It is worth somewhere in the vicinity of \$90,000. When honourable members go to the 6th floor they will see the *Australian Mural* on the wall outside committee room 3. David sat down and spoke with a number of Indigenous advisers to make sure that what he has come up with is in the true spirit of reconciliation. As part of that ceremony I was able to bring into Parliament House some of the participants of this year's deadly stories. We had lunch for those people on the 7th floor. When that was over, I had a chance to meet Eric Deeral's relatives. So from the point of view of an Indigenous day in the Queensland parliament, I think today has been the day.

An honourable member: Well done, Brett Nutley.

Mr ELMES: Yes, indeed. If we are ever going to do it again, I would like to spread it out over a week so that we can do it all properly. It has been a very significant day.

One of the good things about this debate is the unqualified support coming from all honourable members who took part in it. I would like to thank them for that. I would particularly like to thank the member for Mulgrave for not only his support for this bill but also his support for Indigenous affairs generally. He has a very deep, caring cause in his soul for Indigenous affairs. We may not always agree about some bits and pieces in the future but I have no doubt about how earnest he is to make sure that the cause of Indigenous affairs is advanced in our state.