




Speech by

Hon. Glen Elmes

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard Thursday, 29 November 2012

CAPE YORK WELFARE REFORM TRIAL

 **Hon. GW ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier) (2.45 pm): The Cape York welfare reform trial has been a very expensive exercise. The Queensland and Australian governments have contributed almost \$90 million over the past four years to the trial in just four communities—Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge—with a combined population of just 2,688 people.

An integral part of any trial is that it be evaluated to see whether it has actually achieved what it set out to do. That is true for the Cape York welfare reform trial—particularly so—given that such a substantial amount of public funding has been provided for such relatively limited locations and, indeed, population. The Queensland and federal governments each committed \$850,000 for an evaluation report of the trial to be completed by the end of last year. The evaluation was meant to be an important tool in assessing whether the millions of dollars for the trial have been well spent and for identifying improvements for service delivery for all Indigenous communities.

But there is a problem. We are still waiting for the evaluation, which is being managed by the federal government. As I mentioned, it was originally meant to be completed 12 months ago. Then it was promised for the middle of this year, then for September, and now the latest promised delivery date is the end of this month. I am pretty sure we can kiss that deadline goodbye as well.

From what I have seen so far, Queensland does not appear to be getting value for its \$850,000 contribution to the evaluation. The quality of the early draft material my department has seen is ordinary and does not do justice to the ambitious nature of and significant financial contribution to the trial. While the quality of the content of the final report might limit its usefulness, a more limiting factor will be the extreme delay in its delivery.

The Newman government recently allocated an additional \$5.6 million for a further 12-month extension of the trial. Unfortunately, we had to do that more in hope than in certainty that the trial has produced beneficial results. While we did not have the data to make a fully informed decision because the federal government had not provided the evaluation report it first promised 12 months ago, I will be looking very closely at the evaluation when we finally get it. We will also need to discuss the evaluation with the federal government to agree on how we can move forward from the trial in just these four communities to develop better services which benefit all Indigenous communities. I do not want to see the trial end at the end of 2013 and lose the legacy of what has been achieved. I hope that the significant investment will result in better targeted and more effective services for Indigenous communities in the long term.