




Speech By
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

APPROPRIATION BILLS: HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (11.02 pm): I rise to speak on issues relating to the portfolio of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, which was examined by the Health and Community Services Committee. As the opposition outlined in our statement of reservation, it was disappointing that only 55 minutes was allocated to examine the minister's entire portfolio including the Family Responsibilities Commission.

What was made clear during the estimates hearing was that the minister actively chewed up time with a long opening statement and by providing longer than necessary answers to government dorothea dixons to avoid scrutiny from non-government members. For example, in relation to the Cape York Welfare Reform trial the minister tried to backtrack and claim that he always had the intention to continue funding for the Cape York Welfare Reform trial. But this is not supported by the minister's action to issue a press release defunding the trial that made no mention of future plans. Considering that the minister during the estimates hearing stated—

I take a great deal of notice, obviously, of what the boss tells me to do. Can I say for the benefit of Hansard that he is always right.

Given that no satisfactory answer was provided, it begs the question: was the Premier involved? Did the Premier ring the minister in the Neville Bonner Building and tell him to fix his mistake and continue the funding? Was this after Tony Abbott called the Premier to demand that funding for the trial continue? This would be plausible then but maybe not so much now that Tony Abbott and Warren Truss do not want to be seen anywhere near any member of the Newman government. If the Premier is always right, as the minister says, then the Premier's claims about alcohol management plans on 6 February 2013, reported in the *Townsville Bulletin*, are quite disturbing. The Premier was quoted as saying, 'Mr Newman said they had not worked to reduce alcohol-related violence.' However, in the same article it stated, 'Glen Elmes later said there were signs the plans had been effective in reducing crime and boosting school attendance.' Queensland has a minister who backflipped on the important issue of the Cape York Welfare Reform trial, one day defunding it and the next day having an epiphany and continuing funding, and a Premier and minister who are clearly at odds on the effectiveness of AMPs. For the record, the Queensland opposition supports the alcohol management plans as necessary at this time. We also support a review of the current AMPs and will look at any potential change that may occur to ensure that the best interests of vulnerable community members, in particular, women, children and the elderly, remain at the fore.

Finally, it is deeply disappointing to see that the minister has not made any progress on one of his 2012 promises regarding a stand-alone Indigenous justice strategy. Up to this time there has been no tangible policy or strategy document released by the minister, despite a comprehensive review and widespread consultation being undertaken to develop a new Indigenous justice strategy called Just Futures, launched in December 2011, approximately three months prior to the LNP taking office. It is

concerning that the Newman government has merely pushed aside and swept under the carpet the tremendous work that was undertaken in this space by stakeholders and many hardworking public servants within the department for it seems no other reason than it was a Labor Party strategy. His original commitment from last year's Service Delivery Statement said, 'In 2012-13, the department will develop a revised whole-of-government Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice strategy.' It did not say that it would develop Indigenous justice strategic measures that would be part of other whole-of-government plans.

I urge the minister to stand up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders who deserve a stand-alone action plan for this important area even if it means using Just Futures as a solid starting point. The opposition was unfortunately unable to question the minister about the multicultural aspects of his portfolio due to the time period allocated to his entire portfolio. If I had more time I would have asked why the member for Woodridge, as the longest serving state MP in the Logan area, was actively excluded from discussions held at the summit which involved other local representatives including local LNP members and why the document produced after the summit contained multiple pictures of LNP members and LNP messages but not a mention of the member for Woodridge, who was at the summit for the entire duration. In summing up, the Labor opposition will continue to monitor both the ATSI and multicultural affairs portfolios to ensure Queenslanders are getting what they deserve.