

Question on Notice
No. 174
Asked on 1 March 2006

MS JARRATT asked the Minister for Small Business, Information Technology Policy and Multicultural Affairs (MR CUMMINS) —

QUESTION:

As members of the South Sea Islander community are important contributors to multiculturalism in north Queensland, what does the State Government do to assist South Sea Islanders?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for her Question and would like to congratulate her on her ongoing strong support for Multiculturalism within her electorate.

In 2000, the Queensland Government formally recognised Australian South Sea Islanders as a distinct cultural group. Following recognition, the Australian South Sea Islander Community Action Plan was launched to provide a blueprint of actions and strategies to be undertaken by Queensland Government agencies in addressing Australian South Sea Islander issues.

Further to the Action Plan, the Queensland Government also established the Australian South Sea Islander Community Foundation. A trust fund, the Community Foundation was established to create a permanent legacy for the Australian South Sea Islander community by providing ongoing scholarships for tertiary studies.

The Premier appointed a Board of Advice to the Foundation. The Board has a majority of Australian South Sea Islander community members and is chaired by the Executive Director of Multicultural Affairs Queensland. Mr Mal Meninga, the former State of Origin great, is the patron of the Board.

The first scholarships were awarded in 2002. Since then 15 Australian South Sea Islanders have been awarded scholarships. I am pleased to announce that we now have our first scholarship graduate. Ms Belinda Arrow has graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in History from James Cook University. She now intends to study for a degree in law.

In addition to the tertiary scholarships, the Department of Main Roads has recently awarded two Year 12 Scholarships to assist young Australian South Sea Islanders to successfully complete their schooling.

The Government has provided funding of \$105,000 over three years to employ a dedicated a Mackay-based Australian South Sea Islander Community Worker.

In addition, the Government provided \$20,000 to the inaugural Australian South Sea Islander Day in Brisbane on 3 September 2005. Showcasing Australian South Sea Islander culture, cuisine and sporting prowess.

The legacy of historic injustice and hardship faced by Australian South Sea Islanders means that there is still much to be done. A positive start has been made and the Government will continue with efforts to assist Australian South Sea Islanders throughout the State.