

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**  
**No. 866**  
**Asked on Thursday, 25 May 2006**

**MR WALLACE** asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

**QUESTION:**

How does the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries respond to the question of reconciliation and the significant issues facing indigenous people in Queensland?

**ANSWER:**

The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) has taken a very proactive response to the significant issues facing indigenous communities in Queensland. This response has been in line with the government's Meeting Challenges, Making Choices (MCMC) and Partnerships Queensland initiatives.

A truly whole of government response is required to address the significant issues these communities face and while the social, educational and safety issues are not its domain, DPI&F responds to the objectives of these programs by specifically addressing the desire for healthy living and skilled and prosperous people and communities.

These outcomes are achieved through engagement and partnership with individuals, traditional owners and community councils. DPI&F staff are employed to explore and develop opportunities for economic development and participation based around primary industries. These staff work on the ground to encourage, support and sustain the business efforts of indigenous people. To help facilitate this engagement, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, through its Cape York Strategy Unit in Cairns, coordinates the negotiation table process. DPI&F has supported these initiatives from their early beginnings and has been able to build on the desires and outcomes of these processes to help progress the opportunities for the communities involved.

Examples of the opportunities for indigenous people in Queensland which DPI&F has helped foster include: Mapoon Mud Crabs in Far North Queensland, Indigenous Cattle Skills development for communities in southern Cape York Peninsula, outstation development opportunities in Aurukun, and fisheries rangers skills development across the Northern Peninsula area, Western Cape and the gulf communities. Pearl farms, prawn farms and barramundi aquaculture ventures are all examples of indigenous led opportunities being explored by our indigenous aquaculture development officer in communities across the Gulf, Torres Strait and along the north eastern coast of Queensland.

In Central Queensland the focus has been on practical reconciliation through business improvement. DPI&F has worked with private providers and indigenous business to enhance their capacity to analyse existing resources and identifying opportunities for increased potential.

As a direct result of this work, strategic alliances have been formed which directly improve the economic and social well being of indigenous people. DPI&F has supported these companies to present at SEGRA 2005 and to actively participate in Australia Beef Week in 2003 and 2006. This active participation in the main stream beef industry promotes reconciliation and enables the indigenous beef companies to actively promote both their business and culture at a national and international level. DPI&F has supported this active participation by Central Queensland Indigenous Pastoral Companies in the beef industry and they have stated that they are now proud to be an equal partner, employer of indigenous and non indigenous people, and successful role models for their people.

In Lockhart River, where the Director-General for DPI&F is the Government Champion, significant progress has been made towards the development of a community plan and strategy for development. The key economic development project in that community is the Puchiwu Fishing Company Ltd, which aims to provide employment for Lockhart River people in the fishing industry. Skills development in fishing, business management and board governance all form part of the package to help develop and sustain individual business enterprises as part of the Puchiwu Fishing company, which has seen initial sales of live mud crab and crayfish to wholesalers in Cairns for export to Hong Kong.

DPI&F has responded in a practical way to address the significant issues of disadvantage faced by Indigenous people in Queensland. Its approach is to encourage and support the development of skills and the capacity for economic participation, and to assist individuals, families and communities to realise self determination through involvement in main stream primary industries.