

Question on Notice

No. 1933

Asked on Thursday, 15 November 2007

MS STONE MP asked the Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Youth (**MS NELSON-CARR**)—

Since outlining to the House on 17 October the formation of the Palm Island Community Company, will the Minister provide an update on whether there have been any developments?

ANSWER:

Thank you for the question. I am able to advise that the Palm Island Community Company is now operating, with the first Board meeting held on 5 November 2007.

On 14 November 2007, to coincide with the first face-to-face Board meeting in Brisbane, I hosted a reception for the Board, which was attended by a number of my parliamentary colleagues. I acknowledge the attendance of the Honourable Vaughan Johnson MP and thank him for his support for the company and the potential it offers to improve life on Palm Island.

On 21 November 2007, the official launch of the Company was held on Palm Island. This was commemorated by a symbolic signing of the Company's Shareholders' Agreement and Constitution by the Mayor of the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council, Ms Delena Oui-Foster and myself, representing the Ordinary Shareholders, the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council and the Queensland Government. The Board was introduced to the community and was very well received.

The Board will shortly commence the process of calling for expressions of interest for community shareholders. Community shares may be issued to an organisation, institution, or individual and the number of community shares is unlimited. A seventh Director, nominated by community shareholders, will then be appointed to the Board. When this is complete, the Board will fully represent a three way partnership - with representation of the Palm Island Community, the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council and the State Government.

The Board will now get down to business. A Company office has been established on Palm Island within the Police Citizens Youth Club building. Negotiations are underway with state government agencies, commencing with my own portfolio, to establish funding agreements for the services the Company will provide on Palm Island.

As a priority, the Company will focus on Safe Haven services for children and young people, and family support services. Over time, the business will extend to services for people with a disability and their carers, support for people in contact with the justice system, administration support for community organisations who request it, and business advice and mentoring services to promote economic development on the Island.

I took the opportunity to visit a number of community organisations on Palm Island and to speak with many community members. Like me, many community members are very enthusiastic and optimistic about the Company's potential to commence a new era in self-determination for Palm Island.

This is a radically different approach by the Queensland Government for the provision of a range of social and business services to residents of Palm Island. As a new model for service delivery, the Palm Island Community Company will be keenly watched by Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and success here could very well mean this model will be adopted by other Indigenous communities in Queensland and throughout Australia.