

Question on Notice

No. 851

Asked on Tuesday, 5 June 2007

MR WEIGHTMAN, Member for Cleveland asked the Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services Queensland, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Seniors and Youth (**MR PITT**) –

Will he tell the people of the Cleveland electorate what commitment the Queensland government has made with regard to reaffirming a previous commitment to work in partnership with Indigenous Queensland to address past injustices?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government is actively pursuing its commitment to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to address past injustices through the development of an Indigenous Partnership Agreement.

The decision to pursue this model arose from an historic Ministerial Indigenous Roundtable attended by the Premier, myself, other Ministers, and the Mayors of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is informed by the Partnerships Queensland Baseline Report 2006, reviews of major policies and programs, feedback from elected representatives, and issues raised at negotiation tables.

The Indigenous Partnership Agreement aims to provide an overarching framework to support government and community negotiations to address the key challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The agreement is to be pursued between the Queensland Government and the Mayors as the elected community leaders of the nineteen discrete Aboriginal and mainland Torres Strait Islander communities, and includes provision for evaluation. Options for implementation include the development of Local Indigenous Partnership Agreements and improved negotiation tables.

Priorities for the Indigenous Partnership Agreement include: land tenure and access; housing, alcohol and other substance abuse and associated behaviours such as violence, child safety and family well-being (including aged care); and chronic disease.

In addition to these significant partnership initiatives, I have given my commitment to resolve the matter of the unspent funds from the Indigenous Wages and Savings Reparations process as soon as possible. The Department of Communities is working collaboratively with the Stolen Wages Working Group to develop possible options for the disbursement of the unspent reparations funds and to design a model for broader consultation with the Indigenous community on these options.

The government has been also active in its attempts to redress issues relating historic human rights abuses:

- between May 1999 and January 2003, compensation payments totalling \$40.1 million were paid to 5 729 former employees of the predecessor departments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Partnerships who worked in the period 1975 to 1986 and were not paid award wages for their work;
- the government is actively seeking settlement of 170 cases lodged by former mission workers in the Federal Court and has, to date, paid almost \$1 million in settlements to these claimants.

I am confident that by working in partnership with Indigenous Queenslanders we will continue to resolve these issues.