

ESTIMATES – JUNE 2018

Business and Employment

Wednesday 13 June – Question to the Chief Minister – Long Term Funding for Aboriginal Economic Initiatives

Mr GUYULA: Thank you. One more?

I notice that both in Output 7.1 and 7.2, the budget shows a large decrease in funding due to one-off funding to support remote Aboriginal economic initiatives, but in reality we need ongoing sustained support over the next 10 years to be able to build strong, sustainable businesses and communities. With the one-off funding, how many remote Aboriginal-owned and Aboriginal-run businesses were supported? What now replaces this one-off funding that will help remote Aboriginal initiatives?

Mr GUNNER: The variations in 7.1 and 7.2 go to one-off funding for the Hydraulic Fracturing Taskforce, NT master brand issue, alcohol review implementation and City Deals. It does go to the regional network; it goes to those other policy areas. I will get Jodie to touch on that a little further. It does not go to the things you are worried it might have gone to.

Ms RYAN: Member for Nhulunbuy, we did have a grant fund in 2017–18—which Andy has already alluded to—for \$1m. That grant bucket is continuing next year, which is one of the amounts of money allocated to us as part of the Royal Commission response. We have not reduced our grant funding for those Aboriginal community organisations where they want. That is specific for governance and capacity training for those organisations.

Mr COWAN: Member for Nhulunbuy, it might be a question for the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation in regard to support for economic development that sits within their portfolio. As Jodie indicated, that \$1m to support leadership and governance is continuing in the next financial year. There has not been a decrease in resourcing in those locations.

Monday 18 June – Question to the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources – Staff Housing in Remote Areas

Mr GUYULA: Good morning, minister and everybody else. My questions might vary between outputs.

Minister, Aboriginal people want to benefit from our country and give something to the next generations, but there does not seem to be a clear pathway for Aboriginal landowners to develop and profit from businesses on our country. I appreciated meeting with you on this issue last year,

but I want to know what this budget has for Aboriginal people who want to enter into commercial fishing, livestock crocodile skins et cetera.

What programs are available to create a transition for Aboriginal people living off their country into a modern economy? Could the department map out a flowchart for people on country? How communities and landowners can get from here to businesses?

Mr VOWLES: Thank you for the question, Member for Nhulunbuy. As the minister, it is important that I give every Territorian the opportunity to start a business in this industry and provide any support. If they need any information and the expertise the department has, it is important that we support them, the department and me.

We have met a few times and I am very supportive of growing industries in your region. I think it is very important that our remote regions and people have every opportunity they can to have a sustainable business that keeps people on country and gives them economic opportunities for development.

A clear example is the Maningrida Aboriginal coastal licence holders. Slowly and surely they have progressed from having a licence—we were just over there a couple of weeks ago opening the fishing processing facility, which is the next stage of their business plan to fillet their fish, freeze them and send them elsewhere.

Not only are they doing that locally through the aged-care centre, the shops, Raminingining and the school, but the rest were coming to Darwin. We want to see that grow, and they do as well, into the rest of Australia. There is a real opportunity for remote Territorians to market their products. We have local hatcheries and the crocodile stuff throughout Raminingining. I think Maningrida has some issues at the moment. I think something has happened at their hatcheries.

There are clear opportunities for this. This is nothing new. As I said to you when we met, and as my office has said a few times, we will assist where we can. That is our job. Over many years, we have seen many Territorians think and plan big. They have been caught up in that. That enterprise, which had a really good opportunity, has fallen over because they have gone too big too early. That is why I will always highlight Maningrida, because they have just gone bit by bit. I think they have seven people working under Don on his land. There are three Aboriginal coastal licence holders there. They are all working, which is really quite inspiring.

The traditional owners of the other land are working with Don on his land first, and they will move across others when they get set up there. It is a real opportunity.

We have seen the Gulkula mine get set up. I want everybody to have the opportunity—not only Aboriginal but all Territorians—and all the information we can provide to assist them in getting through.

We have ALSEDA, the buffalo situation, the Indigenous Pastoral Program—there are a lot of opportunities. We can work together to set something up; that is what governments are supposed to do, work for the people of the Northern Territory no matter where they live, and give those opportunities. At the end of the day, the people who want those opportunities need to have a long-term plan.

Monday 18 June – Question to the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources – Indigenous Access to Fisheries

Mr GUYULA: The frustration or confusion some landowners have, especially when they want to do a bit of fishing around their tribal waters—they have found out they cannot access that water or have a licence because that body of water has been given to somebody else, some other fishery.

You are talking about Maningrida as an example. There are other people in, for instance, Caledon Bay and other areas in East Arnhem Land who do not have access to trepang or fisheries because the licence has already been given to another company. How can we get them to work together or get the Yolngu to have access through a joint venture or something like that—at least get their minds going, that they have a pathway to work on.

Mr VOWLES: You are talking about commercial opportunities for trepang—those commercial licences have to go through the appropriate processes, like anybody else. There are huge opportunities, especially in fisheries. I was talking before about the enormous opportunity remote people have to market their product. Maningrida mullet or barramundi in Sydney ...

Mr GUYULA: Yes, you can probably start with this—in Maningrida we can see it is going with no problem. But when they want to start another business it is put into another category, like commercial fishing licence.

Private fishing for markets in communities and commercial fishing—maybe that needs to be explained to people out there.

Mr VOWLES: I could talk around the edges for a while, but to make sure you get the exact answer I will hand to Mr Curnow.

Mr CURNOW: I think the Member for Nhulunbuy is talking about the Aboriginal coastal licence, which allows Aboriginal people in coastal communities to develop small-sale fisheries and supply local, fresh seafood. That licence had been there for a while. One of my directors and I met with a lot of people, particularly around Nhulunbuy and Ski Beach a number of years ago, which highlighted what some of the impediments were to people getting back into commercial fishing.

It is a real shame that, historically, a lot of Aboriginal people owned mud crab and barramundi

licences and over the years let them go or sold them to someone else. Now, being limited-entry licences, people who decide they want to get back into the fishery—it means they need to purchase them off the owners of those licences.

For those reasons we have developed the Aboriginal coastal licences, of which we have about 22 granted around the coast. There is nothing to stop any community applying for one. All it needs is the support ...

Mr GUYULA: Even reapplying to get back into business again?

Mr CURNOW: Yes. Anyone interested in an Aboriginal coastal licence can get in touch with the department of Fisheries, I think it is a \$30 or \$40 licence, it is very cheap. It is just an admin fee. Importantly though, our department also then provides training and support around the use of those licences. So far 47 Aboriginal people have done a Certificate II in Fishing Operations. That teaches people a lot of skills in repairing gear, quality around icing of fish, keeping fish suitable for the market in terms of health requirements and all those other aspects you need around fishing.

We also work quite closely with the department of Business on business training and support to put together business plans. I guess the real aim of that program is to teach skills and start people out so that when they apply to things like ABA and other federal funds like that—in the past they have said, ‘We have tried to apply for a grant to buy back into the barramundi fishery or the mud crab fishery were told our application is not very good or we do not have the skills’.

These programs are about proving they can operate for a couple of years on an Aboriginal coastal licence. They will actually have a business case behind them so that when they go forward to some of those processes they will have a much better chance of taking that forward.

In addition to wild stock fishing, there are also aquaculture opportunities and the department has been doing a lot of work around oysters. I think there are now some oyster trials at Nhulunbuy, also on the Tiwis and Goulburn Islands. Tasmanian Seafoods which is the owner of all the wild stock trepang licences at the moment is also doing a lot of work with a lot of Aboriginal communities around aquaculture and farming of trepang rather than wild catch. That looks like an exciting opportunity there.

In the past we have also done a lot of work with a number of communities around the breeding and harvest of clams, which has mostly been about small scale local supply. So there are plenty of opportunities there. I guess if there are people in your electorate who are keen—there are a number of people who already have Aboriginal coastal licences in your area, but if there are others they can get in touch with the department of Fisheries as well.

Monday 18 June – Question to the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources – Indigenous Businesses, Industries and Skills Development

Mr GUYULA: Sure. The other problem people are having is—I have spoken to landowners who are completely frustrated about their dealings with the land council, particularly landowners who want to develop businesses on their own land and are being required to obtain section 19 leases. It does not make any sense for a landowner to give themselves a lease on their own land. This is costly and time consuming. I understand some of your grants require landowners to have NLC consent. For those landowners who do not want to jump through these hoops and simply want to start businesses on their land, what support can government provide?

Mr VOWLES: Thank you for the question, Member for Nhulunbuy. I will not get in the middle of a dust-up between the land council and traditional owners.

Mr GUYULA: We are at the moment.

Mr VOWLES: Yes. That is your right and almost your responsibility to go through that process. I cannot step outside of the jurisdiction; section 19 is with the federal government. I do appreciate your concerns around that.

On the other side of things, it gives me an opportunity to say that as a department we have the expertise to assist people getting through that but in regards to your first statement there. I will not get into who is right or wrong or the issues regarding land councils. That is for the traditional owners and the land councils to deal with and I wish you well in your endeavours.

Mr GUYULA: We just want to get some sort of support and get started because since I got here, the business opportunities have been there. People are wanting to start, and I know they want to do it because there were fisheries and timber businesses a long time ago and that is the system people want to get back into and get started. Because of different laws here, there and everywhere, it is not giving people any choice but just to sit under a tree and think about it. We are not getting anywhere.

Budget Paper No 3 talks about supporting local skills development and employment among industry. I want to see on-the-job training for Aboriginal people, communities and on homelands. Can you outline the plan for local skills development?

Mr VOWLES: Of course, in all governments and all politicians across the country—I will speak about the Northern Territory. We want to see opportunities for employment on country, looking after country and industry, as you know.

Aboriginal people, for many years, have been involved in these industries—the cattle industry, fishing, agriculture and horticulture. It is a real opportunity for us. We are talking about taking care of land and country. I say that all happens, but what I would like to see is the opportunities that happen through jobs—real jobs.

That ideally would be with their own enterprises with economic sustainability. We never want to see—but we continue to see—people sitting under trees, bored out of their minds. While, respecting culture and traditions is very important parts of our community and makeup, we also want to see them reach their full potential— whatever potential they want to have.

I digress a little here. It is not always about the footy and rugby league players playing on the national stage being role models and getting people out doing jobs, for me it is the people working in the schools, the tuckshops, and having full-time jobs within those communities. They are the real role models—people out doing this stuff.

We, as a government, need to make sure we are providing every opportunity for jobs.

Fishery compliance—what am I reading here? Supporting that is our Indigenous rangers. We have Cert I and II. We have 177 people trained through our rangers program. That is an important aspect of it. But you are going to industry—is that where you are headed on this, Member for Nhulunbuy?

Mr GUYULA: Yes. Some business people came to my office and talked about giving on-the-job training, especially for school leavers. When they leave school, what is there for training in building, fishing, on country or even out on apprenticeships—motor mechanics or whatever? At least they get towards getting a profession. Here we are talking maybe fishing industry, cattle or even crocodile. How do they go about it? They have the skills and we can gain the skills. It is no problem in having our skills. It is just a pathway that we need to walk on and be guided where we do not fall into more hoops and stuff.

Mr VOWLES: Yes, I agree, Member for Nhulunbuy. We would always take it back a bit about training, from when people leave school to actually start the training while they are in school, to keep them in school—in Year 9, Year 10 starting that training. There are certainly other programs in other communities that have started engaging them. Not everyone wants to finish school or go to university.

We make sure they have every opportunity to get into the industry they want. If that is fishing, trepang, cattle, being a teacher's aide at the school, chef or whatever, we need to make sure we are giving every opportunity. That is we are all trying to do here. As I said, the offer is open always. I am someone who gets sick of the talk. Talk is cheap—and I will talk for seven hours here—but that there are actually some outcomes about it because there comes the time when the talk is over and we need to do something.

In our term of government I want to see some real outcomes beyond election cycles. That is what we are all trying to do here. If there is any assistance we can provide—as I said, we met a few times. We are always happy to meet, but I would love to see some real outcomes.

I think Mr Trier has something else to say.

Mr TRIER: Just some tangible examples of training—one is in the Indigenous Pastoral Program. The Indigenous stockman's workshops generally happen every year based out of Alice Springs or Tennant Creek regions. That is focused on a range of practical activities, from operational activities such as breeder management in yards and those sorts of things to branding of cattle, but also land management and the importance of managing your stock on your land and ensuring you are looking after your land resources to ensure there is enough native pasture to feed your cattle—and to make sure you are keeping your native pastures in the condition that they need to be in. That is an example.

Another example—which is not a government one but an industry one—is the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association regional jobs program. That program is focused on getting Aboriginal people into jobs in the pastoral industry and providing the support and skills necessary to do that. They have a slightly different focus in that the Indigenous Pastoral Program is focused for Aboriginal people who are working on their land and building skills in that area, whereas the real jobs program is focused on getting people into jobs in the broader industry.

Monday 18 June – Question to the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources – Indigenous Technical Training and Pathways to Employment

Mr GUYULA: While I am on this subject, I would like to clear up another thing. Most people out there would have no proper education to pass the written exams. I had that problem when I left school. I have found that in exams, you sit down for written exams and they ask all sorts of questions that are not clear to—what you really want to do out there. I failed them so many times. It is not because I do not know how to go about it, but it is how the questions are written in exams. Practically, I did above average. That is the step that we need to get to. People will have knowledge and the skills, but when the written exams talk about something different—that is probably something we need to clarify. I have been through that myself.

Mr VOWLES: I do not think there is a question there but I would like to respond. You are right, Member for Nhulunbuy. As a former VET lecturer at the Batchelor Institute on sport and recreation and business—it is about tailoring the needs and tailoring the programs to compliance and keeping that right. We do not want to see people pulled out of the system because it is not right.

If you want to become a sport and recreation officer in a remote community, you only need the basics of how to ask for funding and how to provide a short budget about what that looks like. But there are other people with those expertise as well. It is about using what is around you.

We have obviously been very successful in the rangers program, over the years in the fishing program—I do not know if Mr Curnow wants to add anything about the training.

Mr CURNOW: I think the minister has highlighted it there, that it was recognised very early on that

when we looked around for some of the training around compliance powers and also some of the fishing operations, there were courses nationally you could do and training providers that would do it, but they were very much focused on a reading and writing Balanda-type approach to those trainings.

The department actually did a lot of work and has developed some training that is very much focused around practical skills and oral presentations. It very much—particularly at the Certificate II level—picked up the fact that reading and writing skills might not be that strong, but the rangers in the field were actually very competent.

We redesigned those courses that now have very large field components. A lot of the training that is done by our departmental staff and water police is focused on skills in the field. That is how the people on country are assessed in terms of meeting those requirements. It has taken away a lot of the reading and writing. With the new fisheries inspectors and the six rangers who were actually appointed with powers for the first time in the *Fisheries Act*, that gets into the area we need good reading and writing skills in, which limits it.

We have certainly tiered the training so that the Certificate II courses can all be done without needing the reading and writing skills, but as you start getting in a proper compliance role with powers, you need the ability to read and understand legislation. That is why it becomes a bit harder. Clearly, a lot of the young fellas coming through in the communities have those skills.

The Chief Minister presented the first group of six rangers with their fisheries authorisation cards earlier this year. That was a great achievement. We saw people with six or eight years of training. We are at the point where we are rolling out the first people with proper powers. That is a real achievement.

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