

6 October 2008

## **LIBS TALK, LABOR DELIVERS FOR INDIGENOUS CANBERRANS**

The Liberal Party has shown its contempt for Indigenous Canberrans by releasing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy that is largely a direct cut and paste of initiatives already being delivered and fully funded by Labor, said Chief Minister Jon Stanhope.

“It is quite bizarre to see the Liberals embracing – and even trying to claim as their own – many of Labor’s initiatives about which they have been either sceptical or hostile and negative for the past four years,” said Mr Stanhope.

“These include the Indigenous elected body, the bush healing farm and Indigenous traineeships – three of Labor’s own major initiatives that the Liberals are – bafflingly – now trying to claim as their own beliefs, in a wafer-thin policy document that is heavy on words but light on dollars and action.

“It is particularly strange to see the Liberals championing the idea of a healing farm when the farm is already being delivered by Labor. Over \$1 million has been invested to purchase a rural property and \$10 million in recurrent funding has been provided by Labor for this initiative. The Liberals, by contrast, have committed not a single dollar to what one must assume is intended to be a parallel, duplicate facility.

“The fact that the Liberals now want to appear to be champions of the elected body also smacks of a back flip. Where were the Liberals during the two years of detailed consultation and planning that occurred in the lead-up to this year’s election? Too busy infighting and changing leaders.

“The Liberals have also copied Labor’s Indigenous traineeship scheme practically holus-bolus – flattering for Labor but not particularly imaginative, nor indicative of much thought.

“It is a genuine pity that the Liberals have not addressed the educational needs of Indigenous children in our schools. Labor knows from experience that investing in Indigenous students is one of the most powerful ways of ending intergenerational disadvantage.

“Labor in Government has improved literacy and numeracy among Indigenous students to the extent that at Year 3 their performance is indistinguishable from their peers, and Labor is now working to extend those gains right through the school system, with support for those who fail to meet benchmarks, case management of individual students, support at the transition from primary school to high school and again from high school to college, and special support for gifted Indigenous students.

“It is disappointing to note the usual tone of paternalism creep into the Liberal rhetoric in Indigenous matters and one cannot help but suspect that the local Liberals will take up where John Howard left off when it comes to genuinely respecting the right of Indigenous Canberrans to a degree of self-determination.

Statement Ends

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Campaign Media Release 065/08