



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Windsor recognises Aboriginal Employment Strategy

In Federal Parliament this week, Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor, has taken the opportunity to place on record the excellent work of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

Mr Windsor pointed out to Federal Parliament that the Dick Estens inspired Aboriginal Employment Strategy is an example of a successful project that has grown from the 'bottom up' and that politicians and bureaucrats need to question the continual drive to deliver policy downwards at the expense of listening to local suggestions.

The following is an extract from a speech given by Mr Windsor to Parliament during the debate on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission Amendment Bill.

[Mr WINDSOR](#) (New England) extract [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004](#)

'The final thing I want to raise in relation to the broader debate is the Aboriginal Employment Strategy, another successful program that has been developed at a local level—not at a national level but at a local level. Most of the successful things that we see in life are driven from the bottom up, rather than being imposed from the top down, and again I think that there could be real problems with the appointment by the government of the day of some advisory panel to tell people what they are going to do. If we fence people out, we run the risk of having some very real problems in the future. The Aboriginal Employment Strategy is based on a model that was developed by Dick Estens. Some of you might have heard Dick's name before. I was fairly critical of an inquiry into Telstra that was chaired by Dick Estens, but he has done an outstanding job in relation to the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy started at Moree, with the participation of the cotton industry, and it has subsequently opened an office in Tamworth. It is a model that the government should have a very close look at, with a view to developing it, because—like Youth Insearch and like Minimbah—there are measurable results on the ground in terms of jobs. I was at a television studio only about a month ago and, while talking to the manager, I was delighted to recognise the girl who was on the front desk: she was an Aboriginal girl from my home town of Werris Creek. I asked her about how long she had been there, and she told me she had found employment through the Aboriginal Employment Strategy based in Tamworth. The manager told me that one of their other people was moving on to another job somewhere else in the network and, because they had been so pleased with the relationship they had developed with the Aboriginal Employment Strategy people, he was going to go back to them to get a replacement. He also said that the girl who was behind the desk was being promoted through the system. There are countless examples at a local level of interaction between business and the community, and I want to put on the public record the fact that I do congratulate Dick Estens on the work he has done in terms of Aboriginal employment.

“Regional communities need to stay focused on local solutions and we need to continue to develop the mechanisms to have these local messages delivered. The delivery of our messages will continue to be a focus of my work in Canberra”, Mr Windsor concluded.

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