



Speech by

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ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE BILL; TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURAL HERITAGE BILL

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (9.13 p.m.): I am pleased to rise in support of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Bill 2003. I am pleased and honoured to follow in the footsteps of the previous speaker who covered much of the very important aspects and provisions of this bill very competently. I am delighted to see the coalition supporting this most important legislation.

I do not want to cover too many of the objectives and provisions of the bill again because honourable members who have spoken before me—and who will speak after me—have done that and have done that competently. Suffice to say that I am confident that the bill with the provisions it has for assessment, for flexibility, for the establishment of a register and database of sites, for the development of guidelines in relation to the duty of care and for blanket protection will provide a fair and just system. It does strike a balance that will give certainty to land-holders and to the protection of our indigenous heritage.

It is absolutely vital that we as a nation recognise and rejoice in our rich heritage in order to forge forward with real purpose and identity. Ours is a heritage that we need to remember stems back further than the 200-odd years of European settlement, which is very commonly and easily recognised. It is right to celebrate and recognise and seek to preserve our pioneering heritage, but we have to remember all of it—the good and the bad—and we have to remember that our heritage is some 40,000 years old or older. It began with Aboriginal migration to these lands before that, not just at the point of European discovery.

I raise that because it brings me to Mudgeeraba. The local Mudgeeraba community is immensely proud of its pioneering history and business and community leaders, especially our local councillor, make much of their efforts to retain Mudgeeraba's heritage—its unique buildings, its structures and its hinterland village identity. We have descendants of pioneering families who still live in the area today. We need to recognise their efforts in bringing about modern-day Mudgeeraba because this provides a welcome and a stark contrast to the stereotypical image of the Gold Coast as a city of shiny, highrise, holiday units. We can show that what we have in the hinterland is something that is different and unique.

A logo has been developed and heritage colours identified to be used in signage and structures in the village centre in the future. The logo depicts a timber wagon wheel; it has a bit of the hinterland mountain range in the background and a timber cutter's axe. It is a good and a fine effort recognising some aspects of our heritage. We also have a historical village where woodturners, sculptors, various artisans and vintage car enthusiasts meet inside historical buildings to enjoy fellowship and practise their unique skills and hopefully pass them on to younger generations. We also have an historical association. The Gold Coast City Council is currently in the process of building an historical museum in which to display local artefacts and historical pieces.

All of this work is commendable. The comments I want to make about them are in no way meant to be a criticism of these activities. I hope that no-one involved in these processes or activities will take offence. What I want to say about them is that I would like to see greater recognition by these community leaders—and many of them are very influential people—of our Aboriginal culture as well. Mudgeeraba is, after all, an Aboriginal word. It is a Kumbumerri word. It means 'place of tall stories'. We have many local Aboriginal elders, uncles and aunts who would be more than happy to pass on their

knowledge of the history of the area and their stories which have been handed down through generations.

I am saying that it is very important that all elements of our rich heritage should be remembered, including the time before European settlement by timber cutters and dairy farmers in the hinterland at the Gold Coast, including any of the dark and shameful shadows that may lurk in our local history that relate to that pioneering time. To not do that ignores history. It does history a disservice and it sets back, not forward, the process of reconciliation.

Our local state schools set a fine example. They are leaders in teaching. They are to be congratulated on their efforts because they weave into their day-to-day activities recognition of the region's Aboriginal history. Last week Worongary State School celebrated its tenth birthday. The school was built in the International Year of Indigenous People in 1993. The name Worongary means 'the vine that climbs'. The school has embraced this theme with open arms. All the school house names are in the local Aboriginal language for flora and fauna. They have murals on the walls of the assembly area and other artwork with indigenous themes. There are NAIDOC Day celebrations and there is recognition of cultural heritage in every aspect of what they do. It is an outstanding school which has real vision and commitment to the future while recognising and celebrating the past.

I have discussed these bills and their provisions with representatives of my local Aboriginal organisation, the Kalwun Development Corporation. With local elder Graham Dillon at the helm, the organisation looks after the welfare of local Aboriginal people, but also works hard to promote and raise awareness of the Gold Coast's rich indigenous heritage. It undertakes a range of tourism related activities to enhance the experience of international and domestic tourists. It supports the Nunuckle dancers, who regularly entertain and welcome visitors at conferences and perform at special events. The organisation is fully supportive of this legislation. It said that it is a good step on the road to reconciliation and it is an excellent show of faith by this government in recognising the importance of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Queensland.

I hope to see a real flow-on effect in land use and development, particularly in areas like the Gold Coast hinterland, which still has sacred sites and locations of Aboriginal cultural heritage. While I accept that development will and must continue, I want to see it done in harmony with our Aboriginal heritage. These sites are under increasing threat from development as the population grows and demand for housing increases and pushes residential development further and further into the hinterland. While there are other concerns and factors that need to be considered, like the environmental impact of that growth and development, we need to ensure that our Aboriginal heritage and historical sites are maintained and protected within that process in a harmonious way.

I am glad to see that the duty of care element contained in these bills provides that protection for the Gold Coast so that our Aboriginal cultural heritage is recognised, protected and celebrated. I am extremely proud of this legislation and this government. I congratulate the minister and his staff on their efforts in putting together these bills. I am happy to commend the bills to the House.