



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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CONSTITUTION (PREAMBLE) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (5.02 pm): The Constitution (Preamble) Amendment Bill seeks to amend the Constitution of Queensland 2001 by inserting a preamble into the Constitution. Not only will we be opposing this bill; but an amendment to our Constitution on this scale should never have been presented without seeking the views of the Queensland public. When legislation is put before the House, lobbyists, interest groups, concerned citizens for and against make their position known. With these proposed changes, I have not been contacted by anyone who is for this preamble. Yet I have been confronted by numerous lobby groups and citizens expressing great concern about the insertion of this preamble, which is not being done by referendum.

This preamble has nothing to do with improving the quality of life of Indigenous people. I have worked with many Indigenous people who I know would give this preamble the thumbs down. The question is: who has the government consulted to implement these changes to our Constitution? The government never consulted with the Queensland people. It never consulted with the majority of the Indigenous people. In this state there is supposed to be equality. Obviously you do not have to be Einstein to work out that this preamble has the potential to cause division. All Australians from all different walks of life and backgrounds have a story and all of us have contributed in some way or form and deserve acknowledgement. Many Aboriginal people will see this as a way of creating more division, rather than uniting us. It is bad medicine to elevate one cultural group at the exclusion of another. Governments must seek to unite, not to divide. Singling out one racial group or cultural group for special praise and recognition above all others is contrary to our egalitarian society.

This government should be pursuing real advancement for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, not rhetoric topped with ice-cream that looks sweet but contributes nothing. This government needs to talk to Indigenous people. It will find that they are not looking for a preamble. They are looking for opportunities to climb the ladder, looking for employment, looking for access to higher education and, in those Cape York communities, looking to be self-sufficient, to be creative and to have opportunities for sustainable management.

I would like to acknowledge the LNP members of the Constitution review committee—the members for Hinchinbrook, Kawana and Beaudesert—who were thorough and issued a statement of reservation, noting the majority of public submissions did not support the inclusion of a preamble into the Queensland Constitution and felt that the preamble was neither required nor necessary. I encourage government members to get out and talk to the Queensland people who built this great state. They will find that there are many more vitally important issues out there, especially the state debt, the shocking state of our health system, rural decline, the provision of a reliable and affordable energy source and the sale of our profitable assets. For all of these reasons, I oppose this bill.