



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Thursday, 15 November 2012

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LAND HOLDING BILL: MOTION

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (5.24 pm): I was not going to speak to this particular motion, as I thought it should just be put before the House, but what I heard earlier from the member for Gregory disturbed me, to be frank. We heard claims of paternalism against the former Labor government here in Queensland. I really did expect more of him than that. Anyone who has had anything to do with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and dealing with matters in the most appropriate and sensitive way knows that nothing happens quickly. That is not a criticism at all. That is about working in partnership. We recognise that. You might say what is in a name, but we recognised that under the previous Labor government—

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I find what the Manager of Opposition Business is saying offensive in relation to my response a few moments ago. One only has to read my material in this House. My contributions have been of a positive nature. I ask him to withdraw that.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Gregory, could you please state specifically what you found offensive about his remarks so I might ask that he withdraw that specific statement?

Mr JOHNSON: I find his criticism of my comment offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has found the comments a personal reflection and offensive.

Mr PITT: I ask for a ruling on this. That is considering that we cannot have debate in this chamber. Differing of opinion is not what is at stake here.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: It might assist the House and it might assist the continuation of the debate if you would withdraw.

Mr PITT: I withdraw. There have been a number of issues raised by those opposite this afternoon. The concern that I have is with the broad-ranging issues raised by numerous members opposite that the previous Labor government did nothing in the space of assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this state. I really do find that to be quite alarming.

What I would ask those opposite to do is remember that they are not in opposition any more; they are in government. Anything that we say in this chamber is very important. I ask them to go back and look at their comments made this afternoon and reflect on whether they are actually at all correct in regard to the plight of Indigenous Queenslanders in this state and what was done by the previous government. I ask them to have a very close look at those comments. They might well get away with saying those things in opposition as throwaway remarks, but, goodness me, without referencing particular members, I think people have to be very careful about the language they are using. I think that is very, very concerning given that what we saw from the previous government was a dramatic shift from the sorts of things we saw from the Bjelke-Petersen government in terms of introducing alcohol in a major way and having a funding nexus that was tied to alcohol in those communities. Long memories are what is required by everybody in this House. It is very concerning that we are seeing this sort of language brought forward.

The Leader of the House referenced Noel Pearson's comments and asked what he would think. I will refer to that in my speech when we do get back to this bill, because the organisations he is representing have views that are contrary and there are certainly statements of reservations in terms of the bill. I want to be clear that this bill is not a bill that we are entirely opposed to. That is a very simplistic way of looking at this. If that is the way this is being portrayed, again I think it is a pity about some of the remarks that have made by those opposite today. It is very concerning because this is trying to make a black and white issue out of this bill. It is not an absolute one or the other. This is about consultation.

We have heard them call this a stunt. We call it asking for further consultation. We are calling for additional time to do this properly, given that we know there are other matters that need to be considered very carefully in line with it. The *Torres Strait News* has reported very clearly what the consultation process was around this bill. They were absolutely aghast about the sorts of things that they saw when this committee went up there to talk to people. Fewer than five people, as I understand it, showed up to the consultation. Why? Well, because it was inappropriately timed. It was rushed. This is not a bill that is an absolute must to get through. The minister referred earlier to the work that had been done already in terms of surveying land and communities.

Mr Cripps: A long way to go.

Mr PITT: A long way to go. There is an awful lot still to come. However, this bill could use further work. I will reserve some of my other comments about the bill for when I am speaking to it. I ask those opposite to think about what they are saying in this place before they make their contributions, because making absolutely ridiculous remarks about the previous government being paternalistic and going against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—I am at a loss for words. That is a simplistic view of the world. We have to be very careful about the messages we are sending to Indigenous Queenslanders.