




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Mabo Day

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation) (2.57 pm): As all members of the House will be aware, today is Mabo Day—a day when we remember and celebrate the efforts of Eddie Koiki Mabo, a great man of the Torres Strait and a great Queenslander who fought hard for the voice of Indigenous Australians to be heard in our parliaments and in legislation affecting us.

Late last week I had the honour of delivering the 2015 Mabo lecture at James Cook University in Townsville and spending some time with Eddie Koiki Mabo's daughter Gail Mabo. It was while her father, Uncle Koiki, was working at JCU that he began the long campaign for recognition of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the land on which thousands of generations had inhabited. Although Uncle Koiki was not a politician, his campaign for land rights was a very political act. It was that topic—Indigenous participation in the political process—which I spoke about in the Mabo lecture.

During our last sitting in this place we supported the appointment of Joanna Lindgren to the Senate position made vacant by the resignation of an LNP Queensland senator. As was said at the time, Joanna is the great-niece of Neville Bonner and is now the first Aboriginal woman to serve as a Queensland senator. In the federal parliament she will join Labor's Nova Peris in the Senate and the Liberal Party's Ken Wyatt, who sits in the House of Representatives. In the more than 40 years since Neville Bonner became the first Indigenous Australian to sit in any parliament in Australia, there have been another 30 Indigenous Australians who have become members of parliaments across the country. As much as I would like to see even more Indigenous people in the Australian Labor Party, the fact that we are beginning to see increasing representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across political parties is healthy, but it also represents just how much there is still to be done until seeing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our parliaments is regarded as normal or expected.

In the Mabo lecture I shared my belief that political parties must take responsibility for putting Indigenous candidates into winnable seats and providing them with the support and resources to win those seats and enter parliament. I think political parties should set minimum targets for the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates that they preselect. This is not about tokenism or ticking a diversity box; this is about cut-through. It is about recognising the urgency of seeing more Indigenous people in all political parties and bringing to life the spirit of Eddie Koiki Mabo.

Political parties need to reflect the population of Queensland. We have taken that step with women; it is time that we do so with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this state and nationally. This is not an issue that we are going to address overnight, but if the example of Uncle Eddie Koiki Mabo has shown us anything it is that the longest journey begins with the first step. Let us take that first step together and begin the conversation.