




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

National Sorry Day

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Sport) (9.47 am): Today, National Sorry Day, is a very significant day for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alike. Every year, 26 May provides us all with the opportunity to reflect upon the hurt and suffering endured by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who form the stolen generation. While the 2008 apology by former prime minister Kevin Rudd was an important step in the reconciliation process, we must continue the process of healing and recovery because the wrongs of the past continue to haunt modern Australia. We have not reconciled our past with our present, let alone our future, but we are working towards that.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring that our past wrongs are not repeated and to taking action to address their ongoing impacts. In fact, just last fortnight Minister Fentiman and I announced \$150 million over five years for community-run family wellbeing services to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in our child protection system. I would like to flag that at 1 pm this afternoon I am hosting a Sorry Day function here at parliament, where I will be announcing a significant commitment to continuing Queensland's process of reconciliation alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda.

I would also like to advise the House that this will also be a great symbol, with National Reconciliation Week starting tomorrow. The theme of National Reconciliation Week 2016 is 'Our history, our story, our future'. During this coming week we call on all Australians to reflect on our shared national identity and the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and rights in the formation of our national future. We can only truly reflect on our national identity when we reflect on, acknowledge and accept our national history.

Past laws, practices and policies have had a deep and lasting impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and contribute to the underlying causes of continuing disadvantage. The situation in Aurukun is a reminder that there is no denying the real-life challenges we still face. We are being confronted with a poignant reminder that there is still so much to be done if we are ever to close the gap. The wrongs that Indigenous Australians have endured are not ancient history or relegated to the time of Captain James Cook. Up until 1992—that is in our lifetime—Australia's national story included the discredited legal doctrine of terra nullius, the legal principle that no-one had owned Australian land prior to colonisation. It took 10 years of campaigning by Eddie Mabo, a man from remote Murray Island, to finally see that legislation changed. I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone in this place that we have a responsibility to drive changes that genuinely matter to all Queenslanders.

Last Friday at Gordonvale I attended Djarragun College's parade, where I presented student leaders with a set of new Australian, Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags. These flags are symbols of our country's history, both pre-European and ancient. Our country's history is of

course going to be settled on both of those fronts. These may be seen as symbols—that is exactly what they are—but we have seen many symbols. The national apology was symbolic and seeking to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our Constitution is symbolic. We know that symbolism is not about tokenism; it is actually about providing hope for the future. I urge all members of this House to attend today's event, to get involved with the many community events being held around the state over Reconciliation Week and to think very deeply about where we all need to go in the future.