




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Indigenous Communities

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (11.48 am): I wish to acknowledge the teachers, the police, the health workers—the many people who are on the ground every day in remote Indigenous communities who are working with their heart and soul with the people of those communities. I have family and friends who have been there on the front line and I know people in those communities. They have a passion to make a difference and they are upset when they see their communities in the headlines. When the cameras have gone and the fly-in fly-out visits are over, those people have to live there, they have to work there, they have to fight to make a difference—not with their fists but with their passion and their hearts full of love and care to make a difference.

The shocking reports of attacks against teachers in the community of Aurukun are unacceptable. It is not a case of a couple of young fellows ‘having a bit of fun’, as the member for Cook, Billy Gordon, recently said, trivialising the issue. Premier Palaszczuk may have refused to condemn the member for Cook for his comments, but I condemn his comments as they were making light of a serious issue that needs honest conversations and appropriate actions.

Whether it is against white or black people, violence is never acceptable. People do not fix it by denying it. After watching with great concern the reports of the latest violence in Aurukun, we saw the images of the women in the community standing up bravely and saying strongly that violence is unacceptable. They are saying that parents need to take responsibility and they have clearly said that violence is not a ‘bit of fun’. Those women also said that the community needs jobs and opportunity. Unlocking economic development in North Queensland, particularly in Far North Queensland, to provide real opportunity has to be part of the way forward.

Breaking the cycle of violence and disadvantage is difficult and complex. There are no simple answers but, as other communities are showing, there are answers. Part of that is to listen to the voices of those who are fighting, not with their fists but with their hearts and their passion for change. These issues have been long running, with many different attempts to make inroads into the crime statistics, poor health and education outcomes and the lack of job opportunities.

I table some of the statistics as a snapshot of these challenges to give an indication of the disparity with statewide statistics as well as statistics relating to other Indigenous communities.

Tabled paper: Queensland Parliamentary Library Research Brief, dated 23 May 2016, regarding Indigenous community statistical data [\[752\]](#).

There are bright spots and some communities are making headway. Nonetheless, the challenges remain significant and require our attention when there are not headlines of horror, when the spotlight is not being shone because of some terrible incident. The everyday is where the changes are to be made.

I refer to some of those statistics. We know that in many areas those challenges mean that 31 per cent of Queensland's prison population is made up of people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, with incarceration rates of people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent 11 times higher than non-Indigenous incarceration rates. We also know that, on average, people of ATSI heritage die about 20 years earlier than do other Queenslanders. There are other compelling, challenging statistics that are not there to bog us down in what cannot be done but to challenge us on what can be done.

Other communities in some of these troubled areas have had some successes and they are showing that it is possible. It is only possible if we have honest conversations, empower those who are making a difference and do not accept violent behaviour as part of life. I acknowledge the Mayor of Aurukun, Dereck Walpo, and also the people of the Aurukun community, particularly the women who are standing up against this culture of violence and are seeking a change.

One of the greatest enemies of change is cynicism, as it erodes hope, opportunity and effective and sustained effort. I am talking about cynicism among government and non-government agencies and the broader community. A situation is only hopeless if you give up hope. That is why we must work with those who have the answers. I again acknowledge the teachers, the police and the health workers in those areas. We need transparency of data—

(Time expired)