



Speech By
Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2016

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to take Note

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (11.46 am): I move—

That the House take note of report No. 30, *Inquiry into a possible Human Rights Act for Queensland*.

The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee was tasked to consider the effectiveness of current laws and mechanisms for protecting human rights and possible improvements in these mechanisms, the operation and effectiveness of human rights legislation in Victoria and the ACT and by ordinary statute internationally, the costs involved in adopting a HR act and previous and current reviews and inquiries, in Australia and internationally, on the issue of human rights legislation. I will not go into any of the other matters in respect to the reference, but I would like to refer to some of those issues that the committee identified.

The committee travelled to all parts of the state and also heard evidence via a video link from members of parliament from New Zealand and also Victoria that have human rights legislation in place. The committee at the time was comprised of members who were new to the committee and, unfortunately, the new deputy chair, the member for Coomera, was hospitalised and was unfortunately unable to attend but was ably substituted by the member for Lockyer. The member for Beaudesert was in attendance most of the trip. After our public hearings in Brisbane, the committee travelled to Lockhart River, Thursday Island, New Mapoon, Townsville, Cairns and then followed up with a further hearing in Brisbane on 11 April to hear from other stakeholders.

I indicate that it has been my privilege—and I hate to disappoint the member for Kawana and refer to my time in the Senate—to be a member of the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities which travelled to all parts of the country to listen to matters concerning Indigenous affairs, one of the fundamental issues that this committee examined in respect to those Indigenous communities in the far north of our state.

It is my view that many of our people in Indigenous communities are among the most disadvantaged people in the country and, most likely, the world. That is why the committee needed to undertake this inquiry, to consider whether there is a need to establish a human rights act in Queensland. Government members passed recommendations, the first of which is—

Government Committee Members recommend the Queensland Parliament move to legislate for a human rights act in Queensland.

Notwithstanding that recommendation and unlike the inquiry we conducted, at some stage in the future there should be an inquiry based on a bill that is given adequate time to adequately examine all people who are affected by the possibility of the need for a human rights act.

I was quite astounded by the comments made on the record by the member for Beaudesert in New Mapoon, when he indicated that he was personally against the proposal of a human rights act. I acknowledge that that is a personal view, but I believe all members of a committee should hold their opinions before all the evidence is gathered and then form a view as a member of that committee, rather than express a personal opinion, particularly on the record. That was a concern for me and other government members when hearing that evidence and the views expressed by a committee member.

The second recommendation states—

Government Committee Members recommend that where a human rights act is legislated that all Bills proposed by parliament be accompanied with a "statement of compatibility".

Following evidence gathered in both New Zealand and Victoria, a theme that the committee explored was whether any bill coming into parliament should have a statement of compatibility so that a portfolio committee could adequately examine and understand the possible impacts on human rights as a result of proposed legislation. The committee felt that recommendation was warranted.

Government committee members also recommended that the judiciary not have any part of the complaint process where a person is perceived to have suffered a human rights matter. I have run out of time.