




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Keppel Electorate, Woppaburra People

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.40 pm): I am so incredibly proud to acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of representatives and our beautiful elder Aunty Glenice of the Woppaburra people. It is a great honour and a privilege to acknowledge the traditional owners of land I represent in this place, the Woppaburra people, who are the traditional owners of the Keppel islands. I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Woppaburra people and the North Keppel Island Education Environmental Centre have been working in close partnership since 2011. In 2013 a statement of intent was signed. It acknowledges the Woppaburra people's right to protect, preserve and revive their law, language and sites of cultural significance. It facilitates education and reconciliation practices through mutual respect and recognition of Woppaburra ancestors. Every year hundreds of school students visit Principal Roger Searle and the team at the North Keppel Island EEC to learn about the shared histories and cultures and the respect for each other that is modelled by Woppaburra and the EEC staff.

One significant change which has occurred through this partnership is the reconnection of Woppaburra elders to their country, demonstrating the Woppaburra people's sovereign ancestral and traditional ownership over country and demonstrating the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations, equality and equity, unity, institutional integrity and historical acceptance. This access and connection are vital for Woppaburra people's dreaming and sense of belonging, identity and health. I congratulate the Woppaburra and the North Keppel Island EEC, whose work was acknowledged earlier this year by the awarding of an esteemed Queensland Reconciliation Award in the education category. That award was presented by the Premier and was an acknowledgement of the work undertaken by both the EEC and the Woppaburra people towards reconciliation.

On 24 June this year there was another historic chapter written for the Woppaburra people with the official celebration of the declaration of Balban Dara Guya—'mangroves', 'creek and fish' in Woppaburra—as a fish habitat area on Great Keppel Island because of its important environmental and cultural significance, which is now protected from the impacts of coastal development. In many ways Balban Dara Guya is an iconic milestone for Queensland's declared fish habitat area network. It is the first fish habitat area declared on an offshore continental island. It is the first to have Indigenous wording as its name and the first to incorporate Indigenous interpretation material on site. I thank island resident Carl Svendsen, who saw and appreciated the spectacular environmental values Leekes Creek holds and who first nominated the area for declaration as a fish habitat area in 2006. The collaboration between state and federal agencies, such as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Marine Parks and the department, and the Woppaburra was pivotal to the success of this venture. I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the Woppaburra for their dedication to reconciliation.