




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Scott, Dr E, AO; Lenton, Mr G

 **Hon. M FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (11.50 am): Last week I was honoured to join the Premier to pay my respects to Dr Evelyn Scott AO at her state funeral in Townsville. We were among hundreds of members of the community, family and friends who gathered to celebrate Dr Scott's life and her many great achievements. Throughout her life she was recognised for her work with countless titles, medals, qualifications and awards. This included the Queen's Jubilee Medal, a Centenary Medal, an Order of Australia and being named a Queensland Great.

Dr Scott was the first General Secretary of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, the Chair of the Cairns and District Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Women and Chairperson for the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. She received honorary doctorates from three universities and was passionate about the environment and the rights of traditional owners to the Great Barrier Reef.

Dr Scott was truly amazing. There is one word that consistently comes up when describing Dr Scott: a trailblazer. She was well and truly ahead of her time and was a tireless and passionate advocate for Indigenous people and for reconciliation. In fact, at the service Senator Pat Dodson spoke about the commitment Dr Scott made in terms of advocating for the referendum in 1967 for Indigenous rights. Senator Dodson said that had it not been for her efforts, we could very well have missed the opportunity for Indigenous people to gain such rights.

Born in the 1930s at a time when Aboriginal people did not have basic rights that many of us take for granted, Dr Scott recognised early that her people deserve better. She did not settle for the status quo. She went on to fight for legal, housing, employment and medical services for Indigenous communities and the empowerment of Indigenous women.

Dr Scott's passing is a huge loss not only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but also for Queensland as a whole. I say to Dr Scott's family and friends: my thoughts are with you during this most difficult time. Please take comfort in knowing she is leaving Queensland in a better place because of everything she fought for and achieved during her life. To this day there is still more work to be done following in the footsteps of Dr Scott's reconciliation journey. We all have a responsibility to ensure her legacy lives on by striving for fairness and equality for all Queenslanders no matter the colour of the skin, where people are from or their cultural and personal beliefs. In fact, in his contribution at the service her son, Sam Backo, eloquently summed up Dr Scott's view on reconciliation. He said, 'We are all one race, the human race.' As Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, this is a responsibility I take very seriously. It is something I will continue to work towards each and every day so that we can truly reconcile and also have reconciliation to which Dr Scott devoted her life.

I would also like to add to my contribution that it is with great sadness that I learnt of the passing of Winton's Mayor, 'Butch' Lenton. Butch was a salt-of-the-earth man. He served his community with distinction for more than 20 years. Born and raised in Winton, Butch completed his mechanical apprenticeship with the local council. Then along with his wife, Ros, he established a successful mechanical business in town. Butch was truly a man who loved Winton and was proud to serve his community. I wish to pass on my condolences to his family and friends during this difficult time. His passing will be a huge loss for both Winton and local government in Queensland.

I reflect on the one and only opportunity I had to visit the area recently. He proudly showed me around many of the local parts of Winton that he was extremely passionate about, particularly the dinosaur museum out there, which is close to town. He certainly will be a significant loss to that area. He was a great man and his passing is a sad loss for Winton and for Queensland.