



Speech By  
**Cynthia Lui**


**MEMBER FOR COOK**

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## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

### **Torres Strait Islands, Climate Change**

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (2.41 pm): I rise to speak about the impact of climate change on the Torres Strait Islands. The beautiful islands of the Torres Strait sit in the pristine part of Far North Queensland, scattered between Papua New Guinea and Australia. There are 16 inhabited islands and 17 discrete remote communities. These islands have been occupied by Torres Strait Islanders for many generations, with lifestyle and traditional cultural practices depicted through songs and dance. The stories told through Torres Strait Island songs and dance reflect the strong connection that Torres Strait Islanders have with the land and sea.

Today I would like to raise awareness of climate change and the impact it poses on vulnerable island communities and first nations people of the Torres Strait in my electorate. This is an important issue that deserves much attention as the impact is quite broad in that it not only affects the physical make-up of these island communities but also has an ongoing effect on the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing of a whole race of people.

Climate change seems to be an issue that attracts ongoing for-and-against debates, particularly around the types of government policies that influence climate change. Research shows—

The excessive use of fossil fuels for energy production is creating a build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas emitted when fossil fuels, such as coal and natural gas, are burned to create energy and although this is disputed, rising levels of greenhouse gases are believed to be the cause of global warming.

What people are experiencing in the Torres Strait, particularly the most vulnerable low-lying island communities, are inundation and structural damage associated with the rapid rising of the sea level. In 2017 the *Guardian* wrote an article titled 'The island is being eaten: how climate change is affecting the Torres Strait' which described the very real impact of climate change affecting Boigu community, the real experience of the community's cemetery facing inundation and roads being washed into the sea, a seawall being installed to protect the community failing and the anxiety around not being able to stop erosion.

In August I visited Boigu Island. In January I visited Yam Island with Minister Craig Crawford. The story that resonates most with me is of a little boy on a typical night sitting down after dinner to watch TV and being shocked by sea water rushing into his home. This is the reality that people in remote communities in the Torres Strait face. This is an issue of not only state but also federal responsibility. It is a global issue that needs much attention. We need to make a start here in Queensland and nationally. If we are going to tackle this worldwide problem we need to do it today.