



Speech By  
**Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe**


**MEMBER FOR SANDGATE**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2018

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Mackenroth, Hon. TM; Australian South Sea Islanders**

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (2.10 pm): I want to commence my contribution to the Matters of Public Interest debate by associating myself with the remarks of the Premier, ministers and other members, including the Leader of the Opposition, in memory of Terry Mackenroth and to extend my condolences to Mary and all of Terry's family. He was indeed a great leader of the Labor movement and a great figure in Queensland politics.

Today is an historic day for Queensland. For the first time in this parliament's 158-year history we will hear the voice of an Australian South Sea islander. I acknowledge and note the first speech by the member for Mirani, which he will make later today. Today, Queenslanders with Australian South Sea islander heritage can feel extremely proud. Our Australian South Sea islander community has contributed much to Queensland's economic, social and cultural fabric. As multicultural affairs minister, I advise the House that the Palaszczuk government wants this vital community's voice heard—not just here in this parliament but also throughout Queensland. We cannot right past wrongs. We cannot ever atone for past practices that permitted the kidnapping and enslavement of South Sea islanders, but the Palaszczuk government will work closely with this significant Queensland community to identify positive steps towards a brighter future.

Indeed, work is already underway. In this regard I would like to acknowledge the work of my predecessor, the member for McConnel, who is now the Minister for Education. On 21 September 2017 the member for McConnel, the then minister for multicultural affairs, hosted a community meeting in Mackay to hear firsthand the needs and aspirations of Queensland's Australian South Sea islander community. I note that the member for Mackay and the current and former members for Mirani also attended that meeting.

At that Mackay meeting a decision was made to establish a statewide body so that the Australian South Sea islanders could speak with one voice. The members of a community-led interim working group were identified to explore the preferred approach for the establishment of a state representative body. Through funding from the Palaszczuk government's Community Action for a Multicultural Society—or CAMS—program, the Mackay Regional Council was tasked with assisting the interim working group. The funding allowed the Mackay Regional Council to recruit a part-time officer to assist in setting up the body but, unfortunately, recruitment has been disrupted by a range of unforeseen circumstances.

Therefore, today I have increased the state's funding contribution to enable this critical role to be a full-time officer and instructed my department to work with the council to quickly secure a suitable person to work intensively with the community to establish that statewide body. On this issue I want to

acknowledge the input from the member for Mackay. She has been very active in speaking on behalf of the Australian South Sea islander community in relation to this issue. This morning my office has spoken with a delighted Mayor of Mackay, Greg Williamson.

The Palaszczuk government's multicultural policy titled 'Our story, our future', outlines the unique history, culture and contribution of Australian South Sea islander people. Our policy ensures that this significant section of the Queensland community is recognised by the Palaszczuk government as an integral part of Queensland's rich multicultural tapestry.

Yesterday I met with the member for Mirani and was heartened to hear what he had to say. I look forward to his remarks this afternoon. He has committed to working with people across his community, whatever their political persuasion, to ensure that the disadvantage and racism that has been experienced by Australian South Sea islanders for too long ends. I ask that everyone in this parliament does what they can when and wherever they can to join the Palaszczuk government and, indeed, the member for Mirani in this important endeavour. We owe it to those people of the Australian South Sea islander community who have suffered for too long. We owe it to the broader community, which has benefited from the Australian South Sea islander community for over 150 years. As a consequence of our diversity Queensland is a very strong state and the contribution of Australian South Sea islanders to that diversity and to our great strength is something that should never be forgotten and should be remarked upon whenever we have a chance to do so.