




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Record of Proceedings, 26 March 2019

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Baloon Caves, Aboriginal Rock Art; Hansen, Councillor J

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts) (2.10 pm): It gives me no pleasure to rise to speak to this matter of public interest. I do so on behalf of the Carnarvon Gorge Aboriginal working group and traditional owner representatives of that country, the Bidjara, Karingbal and Garingbal groups, having recently received a letter from them following behaviour that occurred in this chamber.

During the parliamentary sitting of 13 February, in an attempt to score political points against the government, the member for Warrego tabled photographs of Aboriginal rock art from the Baloon Caves that were damaged during last year's bushfire in the Carnarvon National Park. Shortly after that I addressed the House to convey my disgust at the member's actions, because I knew that that went against the express wishes of the owners of those stories.

The Carnarvon Gorge Aboriginal working group has since written to me to express the grief they felt when the member opposite tabled these photos. They wrote—

It was a shock and very upsetting for us when photographs of the destruction at the site were tabled in Parliament. The act of tabling those photographs, leaving aside the question of how they were obtained when the site is restricted, was extremely offensive. It undermined our own management of the matter, disregarded our grief, and made our loss a political point scoring exercise. We were, and remain, disgusted by this behaviour.

I table this letter for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Letter, undated, from The Carnarvon Gorge Aboriginal working group to the Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts, Hon. Leeanne Enoch, regarding tabled photographs of the destruction of cultural works at Carnarvon Gorge [404](#).

In December last year I visited the site of this fire with traditional owners and I cannot begin to describe the sorrow this community was experiencing. As a traditional owner myself, I understand the deep spiritual significance that cultural artefacts like these have. The potential loss of artwork such as this is akin to losing a loved one.

If the member for Warrego had taken the time to speak to the traditional owners about this issue before using their pain as a political weapon, she would have received the same request that I received, which was to allow them time to communicate the loss within their communities and family groups before the news was made public. The action of the member for Warrego stands rightfully condemned and I believe that she owes the traditional owners an apology.

If we are to truly represent the first nations people in this place, we need to rebuild the trust that has been eroded over many years. That starts with respect: respect for culture, respect for country and respect for the wishes of a people who have cared for this country for thousands of generations. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and I will work with the traditional owners to investigate how this artwork might be restored and minimise the chance of this happening again here or elsewhere in the state. We will do this as partners.

The way we behave when we are discussing issues such as cultural heritage is an important signal for what we truly believe. In recent events across the world we have seen what happens when racism is allowed to go unchallenged. From a personal perspective, last year I was the subject of racist comments from Councillor James Hansen of the Fraser Coast Regional Council. Councillor Hansen made comments on social media calling into question my Aboriginality and, in doing so, my connection to my community and my family. Those comments were hurtful to both my family and me and I made a formal complaint against the councillor, as did the mayor of Fraser Coast and others.

Last week, I was advised that Councillor Hansen has been found to have engaged in misconduct by the Councillor Conduct Tribunal. The tribunal has ordered that the councillor make a public admission of his actions at a meeting of the Fraser Coast Regional Council. I table the tribunal's decision for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Document, dated 12 February 2019, titled 'Councillor Conduct Tribunal: Councillor misconduct complaint—Summary of decisions and reasons for department's website' [405](#).

Quite simply, Councillor Hansen's comments were unbecoming of an elected official. They represent exactly the kind of vile statements we need to take a stand against. More recently, the councillor has gone on to provide further offensive commentary about attacks on the Muslim community in Christchurch. His comments were directed towards a community in mourning and, quite frankly, were disgusting. They are further proof that he still does not understand how to engage in positive, respectful dialogue.

I bring both of these issues to the attention of the House today—the actions of the member for Warrego in relation to Aboriginal artwork and Councillor Hansen's comments—because enough is enough. There is nothing casual about racism. I will not sit quietly while first nations people are disrespected, especially not when that disrespect comes from elected representatives. The time has come for truth telling and agreement making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that is what we will be bringing here.

(Time expired)