




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Torres Strait Islands

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (2.48 pm): I am incredibly proud to serve as the ministerial champion for the Torres Strait. It is an honour to represent, champion and advocate on behalf of the interests of people in the Torres Strait—one of our state's most remote regions. I acknowledge the incredible advocacy of the member for Cook, Cynthia Lui, the first Torres Strait Islander to sit in one of our nation's parliaments.

Our Islander communities are resilient and resourceful. However, they are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and rising sea levels. In February this year, the federal environment minister declared the Bramble Cay melomys, a small native mammal that previously inhabited a small sandy area in the Torres Strait, extinct. I am happy to table a photograph of the melomys.

Tabled paper: Photograph depicting a Bramble Cay melomys [690](#).

It is incredibly sad. A Queensland government and UQ report showed that the likely cause of this mammal's extinction was climate change. Climate change is having a devastating impact in the Torres Strait. Extreme tides which inundate communities have become a much more common occurrence. These impacts are severe. The risks are imminent. Having stood on the beaches at Saibai, Poruma, Boigu and Iama islands, I have seen firsthand the devastation of increased coastal erosion.

Given their isolation and their high reliance on freight, especially by boat, damage to infrastructure preventing boats and barges from landing is also of very real serious concern. In last year's budget the Palaszczuk government committed an additional \$20 million over three years to continue to build sea walls and other flood mitigation projects on five of the outer islands. These works are designed to protect critical infrastructure, housing, schools, hospitals, drinking water, roads and telecommunications. It will reduce erosion and give residents on these islands a sense of security.

The cost of these vital works is \$40 million. Our \$20 million was committed on the basis that it would be matched by the federal government. Well, we are still waiting. It is an absolute insult that we have only seen from Warren Entsch a measly \$5 million committed to these works. It is an absolute insult to communities in some of the most remote parts of this state and certainly communities that are most vulnerable to climate change. While the LNP continue to play politics about the science of climate change and bow to pressure from far right extremists within their own party, the people of the Torres Strait are bearing the brunt of climate change now. I stand with the member for Cook, Cynthia Lui, and we call on the federal government to commit real funding for action on climate change.

Mr Power: We all call!

Ms FENTIMAN: I take that interjection. This side of the House calls for action on climate change for the Torres Strait now.