




Speech By
Ali King

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

Record of Proceedings, 12 May 2021

NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION (INDIGENOUS JOINT MANAGEMENT—MORETON ISLAND) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (6.48 pm): I begin by acknowledging Quandamooka elders and thanking them for their care of country over so many generations. I am proud to speak in support of the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation (Indigenous Joint Management—Moreton Island) Amendment Bill 2020. Mulgumpin, as it is known to Quandamooka people, is a special place. It is one of the largest sand islands in the world with impressive environmental, historical and cultural values. Mulgumpin hosts thousands of Queensland, interstate and—outside of pandemic times—international visitors each year. My own family has certainly spent many happy times there and will again.

This bill delivers on the commitment of the Palaszczuk government to support the 2019 native title consent determination that recognised the Quandamooka people's native title rights and interests over Mulgumpin. Under joint management, the Quandamooka people will hold the land in trust; and Mulgumpin will continue to be managed as protected area and public access will be unaffected.

Joint management has been successfully implemented on Minjerribah. Over the past eight years we have seen Quandamooka knowledge and expertise in land and sea management in action. As the member for Algester noted, though, Quandamooka people have been informally and formally involved in national park management on Quandamooka lands for many years—well over half a century.

The Moreton Bay region is magnificent, and I am so proud to see our government deliver on land justice for local First Nations people. That land justice means our whole region can stand proud of our iconic Moreton Bay islands, learn of their remarkable cultural significance and see best-practice land and sea management delivered.

The members for Sandgate and Lytton also talked about this bill as a matter of land rights. I agree with their comments that it is disturbing to see, in 2021, the double standards of the LNP in respect of this matter. In non-Indigenous business, members of the LNP would be the first to support commercial-in-confidence provisions. They would be the first to say that land owners should be able to make their own decisions about what happens on their land. They would be the first to call for cuts to red tape, green tape or whatever they want to call deregulation this week. That is not the case when it comes to the lands of our First Nations people in Queensland. For First Nations people, the LNP has vastly different standards.

I read with respect the August 2020 report of the State Development, Tourism, Innovation and Manufacturing Committee in the last parliament, in particular the comments of the then chair, the member for Stretton. In his foreword the member for Stretton noted the degree of consultation engaged in by the committee, and his comments stand in contrast with the claims of various LNP members in this House. He said—

During the inquiry, the committee welcomed the opportunity to speak with QYAC, local residents and tourism operators regarding the introduction of joint management arrangements. The committee heard that joint management can deliver benefits for both traditional owners and the broader community.

...

The pandemic situation that we find ourselves in, makes it more important than ever that all parties work collaboratively to ensure that these benefits can be realised.

During the public hearings in relation to this Bill, QYAC was subject to intensive and repetitive questions regarding their finances from Non-Government Members (excluding the Member for Noosa). In the nearly 6 years that I have served on Committees, I have not seen an organisation subjected to such a concerted line of questioning. Interestingly, these issues were hardly raised by submitters. Notwithstanding these attacks, QYAC answered all questions extensively and provided further documentary evidence to substantiate their position. As outlined in this Report, the Department also confirmed joint management funds are subject to corporate governance and internal control mechanisms. While this additional documentation and assurances from the Department may not satisfy the abovementioned Non-Government Members, I am confident that they would satisfy a reasonable person.

We have seen the unreasonable attitudes of LNP members played out on social media, in the media and in this House. The member for Bonney spoke with fulsome praise of the beauty and diversity of Mulgumpin and acknowledged the Quandamooka people. He stated—and here I can absolutely agree—that some of the benefits of this bill are: that it will empower Quandamooka people to care for their country; that it will allow them to continue working towards recognition of Mulgumpin as a World Heritage site, something that has long been an aspiration of the community—I remember working on that matter when I was an adviser in the parliament before last; and that it will allow for progress toward the commitment for 50 per cent of rangers to be Quandamooka people, which will assist in caring for country while growing the skills of the community and improving economic outcomes.

However, I note that the amendments moved by the member for Bonney have not been fully and appropriately consulted on with the very stakeholders they would most seriously impact. That is quite the irony from those opposite, given their comments. Those amendments may indeed be in conflict with the Commonwealth Native Title Act. For the member for Bonney to quote Cameron Costello, a valued community leader who has been continually attacked, undermined and had his integrity brought into question by members of the LNP, was self-serving and distasteful.

There are already extensive and appropriate accountability mechanisms in place. QYAC reports regularly, thoroughly and in accordance with all legislative requirements. Seeking to impose further accountability on Quandamooka people shows a lack of respect, if not worse. I ask why the member for Bonney and the LNP seek to impose higher standards on First Nations people but call for red tape to be cut in other sectors.

QYAC and its governance have been an unhealthy preoccupation of LNP members of this House. The only inferences that can be drawn are that they are in fact mistrustful of the ability of Quandamooka people to determine their own affairs on their own land. Quandamooka people have had formal joint management rights over their national park country for over eight years. Their outcomes have been exceptional and, ultimately, of course, this is their country.

Dr Robinson: None of them vote Labor.

Ms KING: That is absolutely their prerogative. I take that interjection of the member for Oodgeroo.

On the one hand, the member for Bonney seeks to be seen as a champion of Quandamooka people—he calls today a day for celebration and talks up Quandamooka achievements—but on the other hand, he seems to want to insert himself and the LNP into the internal decision-making processes of traditional owners.

The member for Lockyer spoke about a perceived conflict of interest between QYAC as having a possible approval role for tourism permits and being a tourism provider itself. Again this raises the question about the genuineness for the LNP's respect for native title.

Dr Robinson interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Member for Oodgeroo, please cease your interjections.

Ms KING: If you accept that Mulgumpin is Quandamooka land, why suggest that Quandamooka people are not competent to make decisions about the use of that land?

The member for Burleigh attacked the process and native title itself as 'secretive'. He did not even try to hide his distaste for traditional owners and for the process. The member for Gregory went further and called the legislation 'undemocratic'.

Dr Robinson interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Oodgeroo, you are warned under the standing orders.

Ms KING: He described a climate of fear and misunderstanding, seeking to sow division. When I drafted my speech, knowing that the member for Oodgeroo was speaking immediately ahead of me, I left a space because I knew that there would be something.

Mr Smith: It's full now!

Ms KING: It is very full! His distasteful piece of politicking was irrelevant and self-serving. It was of a piece with his general behaviour on this issue—irrelevant and self-serving. He sought to politicise a matter that is personal, that is to do with—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, I have asked the House to come to order. I will not hesitate to give warnings.

Ms KING: The member for Oodgeroo sought to sow division, to politicise, to undermine confidence—

Dr ROBINSON: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I find those comments misleading and offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, I ask you to withdraw your comments.

Ms KING: I withdraw. LNP members who spoke prior to me spoke in a manner that sought to sow division. They have sought to politicise. Their comments have been offensive. They have sought to insert themselves in matters personal to Quandamooka people. They have sought to undermine confidence in the native title process.

Dr Robinson interjected.

Ms Bates interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Oodgeroo and member for Mudgeeraba!

Dr Robinson interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Oodgeroo, I ask you to leave the chamber for the remainder of the session.

Dr ROBINSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, you never warned me on any occasion.

An honourable member: Yes, she did.

Dr ROBINSON: You warned me under the standing orders? My apologies. I did not hear that, over the loudness from the other side. I apologise.

Whereupon the honourable member for Oodgeroo withdrew from the chamber at 6.58 pm.

Ms KING: The member for Oodgeroo's personal and ugly attacks are really no more than we have come to expect, but they are deeply disappointing and divisive. From start to finish, the LNP's contributions on this bill have ranged from disappointing in the case of the member for Bonney to disgraceful in the case of the member for Oodgeroo. At best, they virtue signal support for traditional owner groups while undermining native title itself and groups like QYAC. Members opposite have proposed amendments that have not been properly consulted on and may be in conflict with federal legislation. At worst, they deliberately sow community discord for their own low purposes. I am proud to support this important legislation today as the next step in recognising Quandamooka people and the next step toward true land justice here in Queensland.