



Speech By  
**Hon. Craig Crawford**


**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 March 2021

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Path to Treaty**

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.09 am): I rise to update the House on the Palaszczuk government's work to progress our state's journey on the path to treaty. We know that Queenslanders re-elected the Palaszczuk government to deliver our plan for economic recovery, and to keep Queenslanders safe and healthy. For me, this includes ensuring that the two oldest living cultures in our nation also have access to health and wellbeing and can participate in the economy to realise their aspirations for a promising future.

As many in this House would remember, the report of the treaty working group on Queensland's path to treaty, and the report of the treaty Eminent Panel were tabled in parliament on 13 August 2020. The Palaszczuk government confirmed its commitment to progressing a path to treaty and publicly released its response to the Eminent Panel and treaty working group advice and recommendations.

On Saturday, 13 February I was joined by Sandi Taylor in Cairns to announce the next stage of this journey, including the appointment of the Queensland Treaty Advancement Committee. Sandi is a proud Aboriginal woman who lives in my electorate of Barron River. She was also a member of the treaty working group. She travelled through this state to gauge the views of Queenslanders—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—about whether we are ready to talk treaty and about whether we are ready to face the full history of our state. It is a story that is more than 60,000 years old and is steeped in ancient culture that all Queenslanders should be proud of—to truly reconcile our past with our present in order for us to share our future together. More than 1,000 Queenslanders told us that they are ready to have this important discussion and to walk this path together.

As the next critical step on the path to treaty, the Palaszczuk Labor government has appointed the Treaty Advancement Committee. Co-chairs Dr Jackie Huggins AM and Mr Mick Gooda are joined by committee members Emeritus Professor Michael Lavarch AO, Dr Josephine Bourne and Ms Sallyanne Atkinson AO. I particularly acknowledge Dr Huggins and Mr Gooda, both of whom are well known for their commitment to and advocacy for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over many years. The committee held its first meeting this week and will play a vital role in continuing the momentum of our path to treaty process. They will develop options and provide independent advice on how to progress treaty making and truth telling for all Queenslanders.

In 2019, Queensland began a journey focused on reframing the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the non-Indigenous community. We launched the path to treaty and have committed to developing a treaty-making process. We have also committed to a truth telling and healing process. Truth telling will allow us to come together, to listen to each other's experiences, and to understand what this has meant for us personally and as a community. We should not underestimate how important the truth telling part of this journey will be in healing the wounds that have

accrued over 250 years of recent history. This has crystallised for me in the last couple of weeks. On 12 February I had the privilege of speaking at the Link-Up (Qld) commemoration of the 13th anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations here in Brisbane.

Alongside member for Griffith Terri Butler MP, I heard the heartbreaking stories of Aunty Lorraine Peeters and Uncle Robert West, who were stolen from their families and their country—stories that we would just find extraordinary if we did not hear it from their own mouths. The reality is that the wounds of the past are yet to heal. Children who were stolen were stripped of their connection to family, land, culture and language. Taken to homes and institutions, many suffered abuse and neglect. There can be no greater suffering for a parent than the loss of a child.

Last month I spent a day at the Cherbourg Aboriginal community, where I was given a tour of the Ration Shed Museum by Uncle Eric Law. Standing in the boys dormitory, I could literally feel the spirit of those children who had been removed there. Many of those children removed have gone on to become mothers and fathers, raising their own families while grappling with the lasting impacts of forced removal and the ongoing fear of losing their children through contemporary policy arrangements. I want to acknowledge the strength those parents have shown as they do their best to support their children, despite having their own childhood taken from them. I recommend everyone in this House take the time to visit the ration shed at Cherbourg and learn about the history of the Cherbourg mission and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were sent there.

Truth telling will help all of us to reconcile and address the past, and it will help us—new and old Queenslanders—to shape our state's future together, but this involves being open and honest about the injustices that have been endured by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It will involve recognising the rightful place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Queenslanders as crucial to the fabric and identity of our community and as a key part of our collective story. Taking this path together will help us all understand why treaty is so important. It is important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is also important for all Queenslanders and the future of our state.