




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (12.19 pm): I support the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation (Indigenous Joint Management—Moreton Island) Amendment Bill. Many years ago I used to be a frequent passenger on the 175 bus and I often found myself sitting next to a gentleman. As was the case at that time, and still is today to be honest, I would often find myself wearing a union shirt and it prompted a number of conversations with that gentleman, whom I got to know as Bob. I learnt a lot about his involvement in the union movement. I did not really know who he was. He would get off at the same stop as me and often our conversations would continue. At some point later I was wandering through the State Museum with the kids and was in the fantastic Indigenous section, and there was Bob on the screen talking about the Quandamooka people—a people I had never heard of, to be honest—and it was then that I started to make some inquiries and learnt that Bob was an elder of the Quandamooka people.

From then on, those bus rides became much more meaningful and interesting than they had already been and Bob became Uncle Bob. He taught me a lot about a range of things, not by sitting me down and lecturing or pulling out grass or setting homework; his approach is an approach of just having a yarn to you and challenging you to think and think differently and testing your assumptions and pointing out your assumptions. The very clear message for me from those chats was that unions for Uncle Bob personally and for his family and for other Indigenous people were very much a vehicle of empowerment. I see this bill as an extension of that journey of empowerment. I think it is a really important step in the healing process that our society and our nation should undergo.

I note the concerns that have been raised by many speakers on the opposite side of the House around the ILUAs and confidentiality. To me a fairly important part of empowerment would seem to be that you get the right to determine what information you share about yourself or your agreements and how you share that information. That would seem to be a fundamentally important part of being empowered. I cannot say that I understand the legalities of this to any great extent not being a lawyer, but I had a smattering of experience with ILUAs when I was the chair of the agriculture committee.

From the reading that I have done, this process, as entered into by the state government and the Quandamooka people and QYAC, does not seem to differ in any significant respect from other ILUAs and no speaker in this parliament to this point has made a point of differentiation and I would challenge future speakers who want to raise this as an issue to come in here and demonstrate how this is significantly different to any other ILUA. I think what is happening here is what should be happening whenever the government enters into an ILUA—that is, respecting the desires of traditional owners.

I also want to pick up on the concerns that many members of this House have raised in relation to the uncertainty that has been caused by these changes. We all know that change brings uncertainty and it brings fear, but I want to take a moment to reflect on the Quandamooka people and the changes

that they have been through. I doubt that there was any consultation entered into with the Quandamooka people about the changes visited upon them when our society decided to remove them from their lands.

This is just not a matter of moving people from one spot to another. We have to consider what this means for Indigenous people. Yes, it means removal from home, but the land is so much more for Indigenous people. It is a part of who they are. It means removal from places of work, which is what the land is, generating their food and all of the necessities they need for life. Removal from their hospitals, their pharmacies and their community health centres is effectively occurring. It means trampling on their versions of Lang Park and South Bank and the Botanic Gardens—the places of recreation for those people. It means destroying their temples, their places of worship and then wrecking their parliament or their places of law. That is what happens when we remove Quandamooka people with no right of appeal. There was no need for confidentiality because they were not involved in the decisions or the discussions anyway. That is what happened.

The indignities did not stop there. When we did remove people, we also then went on to remove their language or attempt to remove their language. When you remove people's language, you remove their connection to their places of worship, to their places of law, to their hospitals, to their homes and, in many cases, to their places of burial. And of course the indignities did not stop there. When a Quandamooka person—either by choice or on many occasions probably not by choice—had children with somebody who was not a Quandamooka person, our society then deemed that those children would be better off removed from those parents and we ended up with the tragedy that was the stolen generation. When we consider the context of the changes that are being proposed here and place them in the context of the changes that the Quandamooka people have faced, I think we should get a different perspective on what is being proposed here. I also think that we desperately—desperately—need to go through this process as a nation and a society. We need a process of healing.

The member for Algeester's speech yesterday is one that I would encourage all members to read and to consider quite deeply. There is so much about true empowerment in that speech that it is worth listening to and reading. One of the things that the member for Algeester has said many times in this House—and it is worth considering in the context of this debate—is that her people, the Quandamooka people, have connection to the lands of 3,000 generations.

If someone comes into the electorate of Greenslopes and threatens to tear down a church that is 100 years old, they are going to get a bit of a fight. If someone wants to knock over a couple of trees that people have become attached to, which they will call old growth but I will call 20 years old, they are going to get a bit of a fight. If someone tries to knock over a school or, as they did at Coorparoo Bowls Club, tries to build a retirement village on a bowling club or a sporting ground, they are going to get a bit of a fight.

We were not removing people and doing all those things to people who had just shown up three weeks ago. These were people who had been on this land for 3,000 generations. I cannot even conceive of that. When we consider this bill, we have to consider what we are doing in relation to that sort of history. I think it is important for the Quandamooka people and also important for all of the people of Queensland that we continue this process of healing that is going on.

It says a lot about the Quandamooka people that after all of that injustice that has been heaped upon them and upon them and upon them they are still willing to go through a process of healing, that they are prepared to accept a bill that, in my opinion, strikes a balance. It does not give them any greater power than non-Quandamooka people. It ensures they have self-determination, and I pick up on the sentiments of the Mabo decision. We are not giving them self-determination—that is something that they inherently have and have always maintained—but it ensures that that self-determination is respected in relation to Mulgumpin and it ensures that others can still access Mulgumpin and continue on. This is a good bill for all Queenslanders. I certainly support it because of the things that I have learnt from Uncle Bob Anderson. I support it because I think it will be good for the Quandamooka people. I commend the bill to the House.