




Speech By
Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR OODGEROO

Record of Proceedings, 12 May 2021

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

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (6.37 pm): I rise as the local member of parliament for the Quandamooka people of North Stradbroke Island, as part of the electorate of Oodgeroo, to address the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation (Indigenous Joint Management—Moreton Island) Amendment Bill 2020. I note the stated policy objectives of the bill and support them. I also thank the Quandamooka people for their support yet again at the 2020 state election. At the Dunwich booth—where most of the Quandamooka people vote—there was a great result of 60 per cent two-party preferred to me as the LNP candidate, with a 43 per cent primary vote, while Labor had an 18 per cent primary vote.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Member, I ask you to return to the long title of the bill.

Dr ROBINSON: In terms of where the bill goes in terms of native title and the Quandamooka people, I am very glad to have the Quandamooka people's support continuing from election to election. Labor's view is that they have a mandate on North Stradbroke Island generally, but I would say that 13 per cent of the primary vote on the island and six per cent at Point Lookout is an absolute wipe-out. What it says is the way that the Labor government have gone about a whole range of things that they have done on North Stradbroke Island—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): I remind you to come back to the long title of the bill.

Dr ROBINSON: Thank you for your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker. I certainly am attempting to address issues to do with the Quandamooka people who are mentioned in the bill. I do respect your judgement.

It has been a privilege over the years to have that strong support. It has also been a privilege for me to work with Aboriginal people in terms of Aboriginal education when I worked as a tutor in schools with Aboriginal students and in their homes and families over a long period of time prior to coming into parliament. That has been very helpful to me in my current role in terms of working with Aboriginal people and their endeavours.

Today we are passing laws that enable the joint management of protected areas on Moreton Island similar to existing joint management arrangements between the state and QYAC on North Stradbroke Island. The Straddie native title will be 10 years old on 4 July this year. What I have seen and learnt as the local MP over these 10 years on North Stradbroke Island is important as I consider this piece of legislation on Moreton Island.

In terms of the LNP position, the LNP opposition is supportive of the policy intent of the bill. I again congratulate the Quandamooka people on having their native title extended from Stradbroke island, also known as Minjerrabah, to Moreton Island, also known as Mulgumpin. The LNP supports land justice for all Aboriginal people wherever determinations are made by the courts. While the LNP has clearly supported the native title in principle—and I commend the shadow minister for his contribution here today—we have concerns in the way that the Bligh and Palaszczuk Labor governments at times

have implemented or rolled out native title on North Stradbroke Island, and I have similar questions now for Moreton Island. We must learn from these mistakes and listen to the whole community, all of the Indigenous groups—not just the ones that government prefers to work with—and all of the residents and businesses to avoid repeating these mistakes.

Our areas of concern are mainly about the government's approach and these are concerns that have been expressed to me personally and privately by Quandamooka leaders and elders over a number of years—elders who are esteemed in the community like Uncle Norm Enoch and many others. These are the concerns that I am happy to represent in this House and I continue to do so.

First is the issue of the transparency of the state government ILUAs that underpin the native title. The state secrecy has caused many problems on Straddie, and the lack of transparency on Moreton would likely have the same outcome. We can learn and do better.

Secrecy surrounding the ILUA has meant that locals have not known what was being planned around them. This has caused problems. I have seen over the years that private investors have held back while this uncertainty in planning existed. Over the last 10 years many job-creating investment opportunities have gone begging because of this uncertainty. More transparency is needed so that the wider community, including all Indigenous people, all Quandamooka people, are aware of the changes and can embrace them.

Sadly, many Quandamooka leaders and elders were unaware of what was in their own ILUA. That is what they have expressed to me. In fact, some Quandamooka on Straddie feel the Bligh government's original ILUA did not provide the opportunities they thought it would. Some argued that having 80 per cent national park restricted some opportunities they may have had with their own land, knowing that the left Labor approach to national parks is you can conduct very little commercial activity in them.

Secondly, the orderly and timely rollout of these plans locally and joint governance needs to be better coordinated than it has been on Straddie. Thirdly, there needs to be clear communication of the plan so that those with interests like tourism operators, small businesses, residents et cetera can themselves make plans. We saw this in the disturbing case around Easter time with the camping and the confusion between what the government and QYAC were saying; they were not on the same page. It meant people had to cancel their plans or had their plans cancelled. Some were able to get plans back on track; others were not. Many were angry about missing out including schoolchildren who were meant to be there on a surfing program.

Fourthly, local stakeholders should be involved in decisions and implementation. Various Quandamooka leaders were cut out of decision-making by QYAC. Again, that is what they expressed to me. Businesses and tourist operators, some of them Indigenous, were also cut out. Various Moreton stakeholders who made submissions to the committee and appeared at hearings expressed their views that to date they have been ignored.

The fifth area of concern is around the commercial activity permit assessment process and term. Much has been said about that in terms of the length of agreement being short. These problems have also occurred on North Stradbroke Island. Again, I hope we can learn from that and improve the situation in Moreton going forward as well as on North Stradbroke Island going forward. In terms of blocking of access, while government and QYAC say this will not happen on Moreton, it actually has happened on Straddie. Again, we need to learn from it and do better.

Then there is the issue of QYAC and its conduct. Under the legislation the prescribed body corporate is a joint manager. The conduct of the senior officials is crucial. They must be fit. That is a big question that has been raised and is being considered by ORIC and hopefully by the Auditor-General about whether the organisation is fit in terms of some of the performance audit issues and other potential issues raised, again mainly by Quandamooka leaders. These things have been raised by Quandamooka leaders on the record and in private. I would not go around accusing them of not portraying accurate information at this point, especially because it is before authorities at the moment.

Financial irregularities have been reported, including the situation of an AGM report stating it is \$1 million in the red. I have seen a copy of that. There is also an ASIC strike-out, which I have also seen a copy of. These were all presented to the hearings. There is millions of dollars being spent but very little being built—largely the government's fault. There are also issues of conduct, sackings from the ranger program, current rangers with violent criminal histories, illegal tree clearing on North Stradbroke Island without the government doing anything about it—not even really investigating it—and also violent threats and assaults, including towards myself if I was to support an inquiry in this House. I find that completely unacceptable. That is before the Queensland Police Service and is being investigated at this moment.

We have also seen things like when the ORIC investigation was announced filing cabinets were seen being removed from QYAC's offices and other boxes were also removed from the site. I hope that the independent Queensland Audit Office will have a look, particularly at the performance audit.

By and large, local Quandamooka leaders blame Jackie Trad and this Labor government for the division occurring on the island and some of the challenges being faced. We need to see what comes out of the various investigations, and I remain open-minded about that.

The Quandamooka Truth Embassy is a reaction, a protest, to the approach of the government in terms of the rolling-out of native title. The concerns of OSPREY and the concerns of the elders in council—all of these should be taken into council. It is a shame that this government is not listening to all of the Quandamooka leaders, because that is how we heal things from the past and how we move on together, and that is very important.

I support the legislation and I hope the government learns from the past.

(Time expired)