




Speech By
Stephen Andrew

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

Record of Proceedings, 11 March 2021

ADJOURNMENT

Australian South Sea Islanders

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (6.18 pm): Two decades ago Australian South Sea islanders listened with tears in their eyes to many of the commitments and promises made by politicians, state and federal, who recognised their community's unique role and vowed to act on those commitments through their policies, programs and services. Thankfully, today I spoke with the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. As we are yet to make reparations we need to get together to make some changes in this space. I thank the minister for that.

In a recent parliamentary brief I asked for a list of all the government programs and services available to the South Sea islanders in Queensland and I shared that with the minister. The response I got back from the brief cited a single solitary scholarship program created back in 2001 that I had never heard of and I bet the majority of South Sea islanders back home have not heard of it either. Apparently it is managed by the Public Trustee, which annually pays money from the fund to Central Queensland University, James Cook University, QUT and the University of the Sunshine Coast. Apart from that, I can find out little else about the program such as how the money is allocated, how much goes to each university or how many South Sea islanders have benefitted from it and in what ways. I would also like to know what happens to the money in years when no South Sea islander scholarships are awarded. Does it go back to the foundation or does the university hold on to it? I do not know.

I have asked for a statistical demographic profile on South Sea islanders only to be told that data regarding life expectancy, labour force participation, drug use and mental health could not be located specifically in relation to Australian South Sea islanders. I asked how many were currently employed in the Public Service and was told that there is also no record of how many people in the public sector identify as South Sea islanders. Despite all of the fine rhetoric, it seems clear that not a lot has been done for the Australian South Sea island Kanakas. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you understand and that you know a lot of those people yourself. Sadly, no data is being collected and no details are being recorded. No research on their needs has been carried out and no assessment obtained on their health, social, educational, employment or economic outcomes.

The Australian South Sea islanders have been a patient people for over 160 years. They have faced and survived many obstacles. This is not really good enough—not by a long shot. Clearly for the Queensland government closing the gap counts if you fall neatly within one of the Paris Agreement's Sustainable Development Goals, which clearly my people do not. As a result, today the South Sea islander people remain the most marginalised and disadvantaged ethnic group in Queensland, facing high levels of disadvantage, discrimination and neglect as they have always done in this state. They are still a forgotten people and I am glad that the minister and I can do something about changing that aspect going forward.