




Speech By
Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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MOTION

Australian South Sea Islanders

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (5.11 pm): I am pleased to contribute to the debate on the motion moved by the member for Mirani. On behalf of my community and Ray Braithwaite OAM, who was integral in gaining federal recognition for those he represented, as well as his family, I thank the member for raising what I know is an issue that he is very passionate about. I also thank him for sharing the stories of and engagements with our local Australian South Sea islander community.

As a former deputy mayor of Mackay, I know how important it is to the people of my community that recognition is more than just words and it is more than just statements made by a minister. Surely it is a whole lot more than just \$275,000 a year, which would barely pay for two full-time community coordinators let alone cover any of the issues that have been addressed in the motion moved by the member for Mirani.

I remind the House that Australian South Sea islanders were not officially recognised as a distinct ethnic minority group until the Commonwealth gave that recognition in 1994 following the advocacy of our then local member, Ray Braithwaite. The Queensland parliament formally recognised the Australian South Sea islander community in July 2000. I note, as did the minister, that that was bipartisan. That recognition was supported by Rob Borbidge from our side of the House, who was the then opposition leader.

I also remind the House that in that time we held government for less than five years. Let that be a testament to the Labor government, which has failed the Australian South Sea islander community in terms of committing real and meaningful resources to support a community that has given so much to this state. I look forward to hearing the contribution of the member for Mackay because our Australian South Sea islander community built our sugar industry. The shameful act of blackbirding, for which all of us in this state should hang our heads in shame, was the foundation of what is now economic prosperity. We talk about wealth and economic prosperity. We would not have a sugar industry if it were not for the hard work of those men and women, whom my grandfathers and great-grandfathers worked alongside.

I recognise the continuing advocacy of MADASSIA, the Mackay and District Australian South Sea Islander Association. That organisation has done so much to educate our local community and people more broadly. One project that I was pleased to support was led by one of my colleagues, Councillor Fran Mann, and one of the most respected members of our Australian South Sea islander community, Starett Vea Vea. The coordinated unmarked graves project gave recognition to 114 unmarked graves in the Mackay cemetery. Panels and plaques recognised and honoured individuals' names and their passing. I acknowledge the enormous work done by the cultural and heritage committee that was set up to deliver that project in partnership with MADASSIA.

I also acknowledge another significant contribution that has been made by my local community with the production of a television series called *Black Snow*. The series will focus on and showcase Australian South Sea islander history. Not only did the South Sea islander community make an

enormous contribution to the foundation industries in this state; every single day they continue to make an enormous cultural contribution to our community and to the state of Queensland. Filming began earlier this year. *Black Snow* will be released on Stan. It will tell the stories of the people. Recently filming occurred in my local town of Proserpine. I hope it brings awareness and greater education to people across our community.

The greater Mackay region has the largest population of Australian South Sea islanders in the state and I say to those opposite that they deserve more than lip service. I ask the minister to not just meet with the member for Mirani but come and spend time with my community. We ask for tangible and practical outcomes across all government departments. Across health, across education and across justice we need real engagement. This is an opportunity that has been ignored for far too long.