




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2022

MOTION

Australian South Sea Islanders

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (5.05 pm): I move the following amendment—

That all words after 'House' be omitted and the following inserted:

- (a) acknowledges that next week marks the 22nd anniversary of the Queensland Recognition Statement made by then premier Beattie and that the statement recognises Australian South Sea islander people as a distinct cultural group and that it received bipartisan support at the time;
- (b) acknowledges that Australian South Sea islander communities hold a unique place in the establishment of Queensland's cultural and economic fabric;
- (c) notes that the Palaszczuk government has made meaningful financial investment in the recent budget to support Queensland's Australian South Sea islander peak body and community; and
- (d) notes that Australian South Sea islander peoples have been included in the Queensland Multicultural Action Plan 2022-24.'

Australian South Sea islander communities hold a unique place in Queensland's cultural and economic fabric, with an estimated 6,800 people with Australian South Sea islander heritage living here in Queensland. Many Australian South Sea islander people are Australian-born direct descendants of around 50,000 people brought to Queensland from some 80 Pacific islands as sources of labour on cotton and sugar plantations. Many of these people were kidnapped from their island homes, a practice known as blackbirding. They experienced harsh treatment and discrimination during a shameful time in our history.

Next year will mark 160 years since the first South Sea islanders were brought to Queensland. Through the hardship and discrimination faced by the community, Australian South Sea islanders have shown tremendous resilience and courage as a community. They have contributed significantly to the social, cultural and economic development of Queensland as a state. Their labour contributed to the development of farming and grazing as well as the maritime industry, pearling, mining, the railways, domestic services and child care. They have also served the nation as members of the defence force in times of peace and war and for that we thank them and we honour their service.

Twenty-two years ago, on 7 September 2000, this parliament came together in a bipartisan manner to formally and rightly recognise Australian South Sea islanders as a distinct cultural group and acknowledge and regret the unjust treatment their ancestors endured. The Palaszczuk government has worked with the Australian South Sea islander community to establish and fund the Queensland United Australian South Sea Islander Council, QUASSIC, under former multicultural ministers, Minister Grace and Minister Hinchliffe. Since its registration in 2019, QUASSIC has been seeking opportunities to provide support to Australian South Sea islander organisations throughout Queensland and to provide a clear voice to government about ways to move forward and address disadvantage in their community.

Since being appointed Minister for Multicultural Affairs this important work has continued. My department has been working closely with QUASSIC and I have met several times in the past year alone with the president of QUASSIC, Clacy Fatnowna, to ensure that our Government delivers on its commitment to supporting better outcomes for Australian South Sea islander communities. I have also met with a representative of the Australian South Sea islander community in Mackay with the member for Mackay and the member for Mirani to discuss the issues facing the community.

We heard the calls from QUASSIC, Clacy, Australian South Sea islanders and the member for Mirani that more needed to be done and we are responding. This year we are providing \$75,000 to QUASSIC to deliver a number of activities to support Australian South Sea islander organisations and communities, including the development of protocols to support respectful engagement with Australian South Sea islander people.

During budget week I also announced \$1.1 million over four years and \$170,000 per annum ongoing to strengthen recognition of and services to Australian South Sea islander peoples in Queensland through support for projects and activities to address current levels of disadvantage faced by the community. The funding will deliver specific measures including co-designed research into the current level of disadvantage experienced by Australian South Sea islander people; consideration of the adoption and implementation of cultural protocols for government engagement with Australian South Sea islander people; a dedicated position, the first of its kind, in my department that will work across all departments in Queensland and community to drive initiatives on behalf of community; and funding to assist QUASSIC to develop its role as a peak body.

We cannot right the wrongs of the past but together we can shape our future and build on the benefits Australian South Sea islander people bring to Queensland's lifestyle and economic prosperity. I would like to thank the member for Mirani for raising these important issues. I also warmly acknowledge the leadership of Clacy Fatanowna and QUASSIC as we continue to move forward and address many of the state and federal issues raised in the original motion.