




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Path to Treaty

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (10.11 am): Today we mark a significant step on the journey towards reconciliation, towards working to right some of the wrongs of the past and to supporting the aspirations and ambitions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As environment minister I have had the privilege of learning from and working with many First Nations communities and leaders—from the historic land handback of the Daintree to the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people to creating new Koombumerri ranger positions in the community I am proud to represent.

Last week, through our Reef Joint Field Management Program, 16 Indigenous rangers from 10 traditional owner groups took part in diver training to help them look after sea country. The open water and advanced diver training means they will conduct reef health and impact surveys, reef rehabilitation, crown-of-thorns starfish surveillance and visitor infrastructure maintenance. For 36-year-old Girramay ranger Simon Muriata, it is a necessary step to continue the work of his ancestors in protecting the Great Barrier Reef. He said—

Looking after the reef is really important. It is not just about looking after our lands but our culture as well. The reef holds our storylines, our cultural sites.

First Nations connection to country, histories, laws and spiritualities has continued for more than 65,000 years. By listening and forging a partnership founded on respect, we have been able to make significant strides including: returning land to traditional owners on Cape York; joint management of a number of national parks such as Boodjamulla and Lawn Hill; acknowledging the traditional names of significant places like K'gari; doubling our commitment to Indigenous land and sea rangers; supporting more than 130 First Nations jobs through our Reef Assist program; and helping the next generation of First Nations leaders share their experience, make connections and receive valuable mentorship.

We have an uncomfortable shared history in this state—one that we need to tell the truth about. These actions will not change everything, but they help on our path towards reconciliation and our government's commitment towards treaty.