




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2022

MOTION

Australian South Sea Islanders

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (5.49 pm): I rise to make my contribution to this motion. I also support the amendment proposed by the minister. First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the strengths, perseverance and courage of Australian South Sea islander people for surviving under the conditions in which they came to this country. Australian South Sea islander people have maintained a rich cultural identity throughout and across Queensland from beginnings that more often than not were nothing short of horrendous and absolutely deplorable. To the many Australian South Sea islander people who call Cairns and Far North Queensland home, I would like to say thank you for bringing so much to our community through so much hardship. Their contribution is significant and it is absolutely consistent.

I would just like to touch on a few points that the Minister for Multicultural Affairs touched on because this is important. Whilst it might not be seen as significant, it is absolutely important. Specifically, in this year's budget funding and projects were allocated and provided. This came about as a result of a number of people advocating. It includes \$1.1 million invested over four years and \$170,000 ongoing to strengthen recognition of services to Australian South Sea islander people in Queensland through support for projects and activities to address current levels of disadvantage faced by that community. These are telltale acknowledgements by government. We are investing in this. Also vitally important is a dedicated engagement officer who will be appointed within the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs to develop and oversee the delivery of initiatives in collaboration with the Queensland United Australian South Sea Islander Council. This position will be an important link between government and Australian South Sea islander people to ensure their needs are understood across government.

This is all about engagement. It will build on existing work and see future opportunities, meaning better and more culturally appropriate service delivery. We understand the appropriateness of service delivery. It is something that we have been working on. I have been talking with the minister on a range of areas. The importance of understanding it is intricate to the delivery of it. We are also providing \$75,000 to the Queensland United Australian South Sea Islander Council for a number of programs and activities outlined in their business plan, including the development of protocols to support the respectful engagement of Australian South Sea islander people.

Next year, 2023, will also mark 160 years since South Sea islanders came to Queensland. I know that many of these islanders were brought to Cairns and Far North Queensland, and I am proud and honoured as the member for Cairns to be the representative of their descendants. I can tell you that I consider many of them close friends. Their involvement is integral to our community and the positive ongoing development of it.

The Queensland government also supported the establishment of the Australian South Sea Islander Community Foundation, which provides university scholarships for undergraduate students. I am proud to say that North Queensland's James Cook University is a participating university in this

scholarship program and has been able to support a number of local scholarship recipients over the years. It is worth noting that since 2005 the Queensland government has provided funding through community action for a multicultural society program to support Australian South Sea islander communities. I can tell you that the LNP, who as you can see is not really here tonight, planned to cut that from their programs because that is what they do. They cut, they sack and they sell.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. Member, it is convention that we do not reflect on people's absence from the chamber.

Mr HEALY: On the other hand, and in the spirit of truth and healing, the Palaszczuk government is committed to building a state where everyone, regardless of culture, language or faith, is supported to connect, belong and contribute to the great Queensland lifestyle.

I also want to acknowledge the member for Mirani for bringing this to the attention of the chamber. I have discussed this with him. I know that he is passionate about it. I would suggest that he have a good, hard look at the party he is a member of if he really wants to pursue this. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this matter.