



Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2022

MOTION

Australian South Sea Islanders

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (5.20 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Mirani. I make the observation that it must be a source of pride to have such a unique heritage and to be, as I understand it, the first South Sea islander representative in this place. What a unique privilege it is to represent one's heritage in this manner. I think most contributions to this debate have been respectful of that fact. Good on you for that.

A lot of this has been an education for me. My experience with South Sea islanders was pretty slim and related mostly to Rugby League fields. I remember 'Butch' Fatnowna gliding along the Rugby League grounds in the nineties. The member for Mirani introduced me to Clacy Fatnowna, a relative. The reach of South Sea islanders extends from the sugar industry through to culture and sport. Absolutely magnificent athletes have come out of that region. The extent of my knowledge was not great, and I have had a real education from getting to know the member for Mirani, who has always been in our ear about this issue and wanting some action.

I do know that there is nothing like having a person on the ground, a local MP, to see if things are working. There can be some good intention from the government to get that support there, but is it working, is it effective or can it be done better? That is why we are here today, because the member for Mirani would say that it can be done better. I would very much go ahead strongly with that. Some of the stories we have heard are absolutely horrific. To that end, on behalf of the member for Mirani I table the documents that outline the skeletal remains and the reports of the doctor in question associated with some of these horrific actions.

Tabled paper: Document, dated August 2022, titled 'South Sea Islander Mortality in Mackay' [1253](#).

Tabled paper: Bundle of documents relating to South Sea islander peoples' history in Queensland [1254](#).

It was a dark part of our history. I think it is important to recognise that. That brings us to the present. I reflect on my own experiences in Aboriginal communities with our First Australians. They are very different problems but, again, I see value in having a local on the ground, where the rubber hits the road, in order to help. Setting up a body or allocating money is great, but you want to know what tangible things will help. When you are at Doomadgee or on Mornington, you want to know about how to address things like youth crime, health services, grocery prices and the supply of fresh fruit and vegies for preventive health measures. Then there are things like home ownership, barriers to employment and blue cards, which we go on about ad nauseam. Where the rubber hits the road, certain things can make a meaningful difference. That can be put in a similar cultural context for South Sea islanders.

Measures need some context to have a material impact on the ground. I strongly believe that that is where the member for Mirani can add the value to the House, through this motion, and to the process. I know that there are a lot of things we can be doing better. I say that not from my direct experience of South Sea islanders, but there are similarities in the adversities or obstacles faced by our First Australians community.

I commend the member for Mirani for what I think is a pretty brave thing to come out on, addressing his own heritage in this place. I do think there are ways we can do things better. We do need to listen to local MPs on the ground, regardless of the party they belong to—KAP, One Nation, Labor or Liberal. It is important to listen to the debate on this motion and to the member. The KAP will be supporting the motion on that basis.