




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Path to Treaty, Legal Services; Ministerial Indemnity

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (9.59 am): Creating equal access to justice services for all Queenslanders is the highest priority of our government. Too often First Nations women experience or are at risk of domestic and family violence and face additional barriers to seeking appropriate help. That is why I am proud to announce that an extra \$1.2 million over 2022 to 2025 will be provided to two legal services working with vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, especially in regional and remote areas. The funding will be shared between the Aboriginal Family Legal Service Southern Queensland and the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service. This targeted support will also allow these services to educate and empower First Nations women to understand their legal rights and address legal problems.

This government is committed to addressing the over-representation of First Nations people in our criminal justice system. In fact, this was the first recommendation of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report 1, which the government has accepted. Queensland's target is to reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15 per cent by 2031. It is a bold and ambitious target. That is why as a government we have committed almost \$10 million to establish the Office of the Chief First Nations Justice Officer. This office will work in partnership with Indigenous communities to design programs to directly address overrepresentation. We have also committed additional funding for perpetrator interventions for First Nations communities to help break the cycle well before someone ends up in court.

While I am on my feet I would also like to briefly address the matter of ministerial indemnity. Ministerial indemnity plays an important role and has long been used by both sides of this House. Both Labor and LNP ministers and former ministers have been the beneficiary of indemnity over recent years. As one former attorney-general said in this House, 'Indemnification of the ministers of the Crown is nothing new.' That same attorney-general then said releasing facts and costs around indemnified matters 'jeopardises the ability of present and future ministers from carrying out their role'. These wise words were spoken by none other than the member for Kawana.

The guidelines make it very clear that advice must be sought from the Crown solicitor to determine whether any indemnity should be granted. Those guidelines have been followed. Despite what those opposite say, indemnity guidelines have been adhered to at every step of the process. This is also a matter, of course, that remains before the court and I will not be commenting further.