




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 20 April 2023

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Voice to Parliament

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.03 pm): I rise to provide support for the Voice to Parliament. I say that because Thuringowa has one of the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in North Queensland. I am very proud of that. I connect with many of them all the time. I am going to stand up for them and say yes. I will be speaking to the 7,500 First Nations people in my electorate, and I will be providing a voice of support to make sure they get constitutional recognition in the federal parliament.

It troubles me greatly that we have an opposition that supposedly has no position on the Voice, yet on their own social media pages they are the campaign that says no. That is completely shameful. I say to the Leader of the Opposition, 'Stand for something. You can't be a fence-sitter on this.' What will he do about his candidates? Will they also be saying no? I would say that is a question for the thousands of proud First Nations people of Thuringowa to put to the LNP candidate when they see that candidate at some point in time.

It troubles me greatly that the federal member for Herbert, Phillip Thompson, has come out and publicly said no, following the likes of Peter Dutton. There are thousands and thousands more First Nations people in Townsville broadly, and across the seat of Herbert there were something like 21,180 according to the last census data. We expect that to go up. They want to see constitutional recognition in the federal parliament. How can we progress forward? The member for Herbert asked, 'Will anything change?' Of course it will change because it is Indigenous led and they will have a say. The first thing we need to overcome is the constitutional recognition issue. We will have an opportunity at the end of the year.

I heard Noel Pearson at parliament the other night talk about the long battle to get recognition since 1788. I say that we will all have an opportunity. I am very proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government, which is 100 per cent supporting the Voice. The people of Thuringowa know that I will be supporting the Voice. I say to the member for Broadwater, 'Stand up for something and state your position on the Voice.'