




Speech By
Adrian Tantari

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

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PATH TO TREATY BILL

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (10.42 am): I rise in support of the Path to Treaty Bill 2023 being debated at this unique session of the regional parliament being held here in Cairns. I would like to start my contribution by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which this parliament is taking place and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

This bill before us today is a landmark in how we as a community choose to move forward, how we choose to bring the community closer together and, in doing that, how we recognise the process of colonisation that marginalised and disempowered our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Equally, we recognise the enormous resilience of the First Nations people and their strength drawn from the rich history, culture, law and knowledge of 65,000 years of Aboriginal peoples and the unique culture, law and knowledge of the peoples of the Torres Strait.

The Path to Treaty process contained within this bill is a shared journey between the Queensland government and the people of Queensland—Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples and non-Indigenous Queenslanders. This is a key reform with the goal of negotiating a treaty or treaties that will reframe and strengthen the relationship between Queensland's First Nations and the wider community. Path to Treaty seeks a foundation for a better future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—one based on respectful relationships between the state and the First Nations people—and this foundation will benefit all Queenslanders.

Broadly, Path to Treaty will be advanced in five phases. Phases 1, 2 and 3 have already effectively been actioned. With the commencement of phase 4, from 2023 onwards there will be established a Treaty Institute and a Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry. Phase 5, from 2024 onwards, will see the development of a treaty of negotiation framework by the Treaty Institute and the Queensland government and the establishment of supporting structures such as a treaty authority and a treaty tribunal or similar mechanism to deal with disputes, and treaty negotiations will begin within that year.

The Path to Treaty Bill 2023 is foundational legislation designed to drive Path to Treaty. This bill responds to a generation of calls from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland for a formal agreement, a treaty or treaties, which recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians of their lands, waters and air and provides a just and realistic foundation for a reframed relationship—an agreement that delivers broad-ranging substantive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Queensland community.

In the region that I represent as the local member, that part of the Fraser Coast defined as the Hervey Bay electorate, the lands, seas and air are those of the Butchulla peoples which mainly cover the wonderful geographical area featuring the mighty K'gari, the Great Sandy Marine Park and inland. It is my privilege that I get to speak here in this place regarding this bill and honour those peoples past, present and emerging to commence the process of a treaty with them that acknowledges our collective past and moves us forward to acknowledge our collective present and the future.

It was also my great privilege just the other week to be present with the member for Maryborough, the mayor of the Fraser Coast region and the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, as well as many hundreds of locals, at the unveiling of a monument to the Butchulla warriors in Maryborough. This is a monument that was instigated by the work of Uncle Glenn Miller, a Butchulla elder, who many years ago raised his desire to facilitate a monument that now stands in Queens Park in Maryborough as a testament to the truth of what actually took place on the shores of our region during occupation.

The Butchulla warriors monument acknowledges how fearless and brave the Butchulla warriors were in the face of an insurmountable challenge from a technologically advanced invading force that set foot on their lands hundreds of years ago, and my understanding is that the monument is the first of its kind in Queensland, let alone in Australia. It was very moving to sit there and listen during the unveiling address by Uncle Miller whilst he described what it must have been like for those Butchulla warriors at first contact and what came from that first contact. Uncle Miller's words were very clear: the monument is not about blaming anyone for the wrongs done or the sins of the past but to acknowledge warrior courage and bravery that had gone before, and the monument is about ensuring that the truth was being told about what had occurred there on those shores all those years ago.

It was equally moving to look around the site that morning and see in great numbers how the local community, from all walks of life, had come to recognise this dedication to these warriors. It clearly showed by their collective actions that the time is right for treaty and for truth-telling, that a step forward in the right direction was being taken that day, as we are doing here today to ensure that, through this Path to Treaty process, we will also be able to truth-tell as active participants, bringing together our state and our country. Path to Treaty is the right thing to do now. It is right for a more reconciled future. I look forward to the next phase of this Path to Treaty process we are now undertaking and to the fruition of truth-telling with Indigenous peoples of this state and with the Butchulla peoples of my region.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work done by the members for Cook, Algeester and Bundamba, who I know have worked tirelessly to bring this bill to the House, but also the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and the Community Support and Services Committee and the committee secretariat for the work they have done to date. I fully support this bill before the House.