




Speech By
Ali King

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

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PATH TO TREATY BILL

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (11.37 am): Madam Deputy Speaker Lui, I begin by acknowledging you and appreciating your work as a Deputy Speaker and as one of the leaders of our parliament. Today I rise to offer my wholehearted support to the Path to Treaty Bill 2023. Every day in our parliament we say that we are fortunate to share these lands with two of the world's oldest continuing living cultures, and this bill calls on us to reflect on what that really means—not only the strength and ancient beauty of cultures that have thrived for well over 65,000 years but also the courage, the resilience and the endurance of cultures that have survived the last 235 years. This is one of the reasons that Queensland is the greatest place in the world. Nowhere else has living cultures with links to 2½ thousand generations and beyond.

As Queenslanders we share a painful history, but treaty and truth-telling give us a path forward to finally reframe that history. I particularly thank the Premier for her courage in pursuing these issues and Minister Crawford for his hard work and the passion that he shows every time he talks about it. More than that, though, I want to offer my respect and thanks to our First Nations members of parliament: Minister Enoch; the member for Cook, Cynthia Lui; and the member for Bundamba, Lance McCallum. It is not a coincidence that we are now debating these issues of treaty and truth-telling in our parliament. It is down to the work of them as elected representatives, every activist, every elder and every person who marched. Governments do not simply decide one day to do what is right and attempt to make up for the wrongdoings of the past. They are brought to that point at the stage when they cannot any longer avoid it. It is the work of activists like them and all of the others who came before and upon whose shoulders they would say they stood that brings us to this place today.

Colonisation and invasion have cast long shadows of trauma, exploitation, violence and loss, but First Nations people have kept telling their stories and kept marching and, when those shadows seemed darkest, always persisted. I well understand the scepticism and cynicism that some First Nations people feel in relation to this bill and the path to Voice and the path to treaty. I hope that by showing justice rather than simply talking about justice we can build trust together as Queenslanders.

I wanted to be part of a Labor government because I believe in that long arc of history that bends towards justice, and this bill contains many of the ingredients for that justice. They are simple. We teach our children that when they do wrong they need to admit their mistakes, hear the truth of the harm they have caused and act to make it right. As colonisers, we were children in an ancient land among ancient cultures that we did not have the capacity to understand, but we knew even then that what was happening was not right. The Path to Treaty Bill is about Queensland being mature enough to right the wrongs of the past—courageous enough to hear and accept that dark shared history. Treaty is not a magic wand; it is a body of work ahead. I acknowledge that that work falls disproportionately on our First Nations people. It is hard cultural work—it is hard work to relive difficult stories and difficult histories—but together we all want our children to inherit a mature Queensland with justice at its heart.

I am very proud to represent Gubbi Gubbi and Djindubari lands. Like many regions, those lands have experienced loss and diaspora, but culture and community remain strong. I acknowledge PIIEC, the Pumicestone Indigenous Education & Employment Council. I want to close with the words of one of our wonderful local elders, Aunty Flo Watson. I asked Aunty Flo what she would like me to say in this speech on her behalf and she said—

We are finally here on our path to Treaty. Truth telling is so important and if we can have this, we set our foundations for a reconciled future.

Myself as an Elder lived at Yarrabah under the Protection Act as part of the Stolen Generations, but now we have a treaty forthcoming.

Thank you, Queensland—a dream I've always had.

This bill is only the beginning of our path to treaty. I hope that the LNP can bring themselves with the same compassion I have heard throughout this debate to support the Voice referendum later this year. It is time for us to walk together and work together toward Oodgeroo Noonuccal's brighter tomorrow. I commend this bill to the House and to Queensland.