




Speech By
Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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PATH TO TREATY BILL

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (12.09 pm): I am pleased to be able to contribute to the debate on this bill and to do that in Far North Queensland. I represent a North Queensland electorate, four per cent of the population of which are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. My electorate and that of the member for Mackay are also home to the largest population of Australian South Sea islanders and I am proud to represent their voices in my contribution today. I acknowledge the Yuwi people who represent the lands of Mackay and part of my electorate, from Habana and Rural View right through to Cape Hillsborough and the O'Connell River; the Ngaro people who represent the beautiful Whitsunday Islands; and the Gia people who represent lands from the O'Connell River to Proserpine and to the north of my electorate. I also acknowledge Uncle George Tonga, a Yuwibara traditional custodian of Yuwi land, and his leadership across the Mackay and broader Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday communities.

In particular, I acknowledge an initiative that I am proud to have been involved with in my former role as deputy mayor of Mackay Regional Council and chair of the council's Natural Environment Advisory Committee. With the establishment of the Traditional Owners Reference Group, traditional custodians came together to work with not just local government but also land management organisations. As part of their work they cohesively used their conviction, passion and connection to land and water. They have been able to educate not just myself but also many community leaders as well as young and future leaders of our community, school groups and even our local Rugby League club. They often organise visits out on country where sites have allowed a reconnection to country and have been utilised to reconnect young people who were perhaps taking the wrong path. We have seen incredible early interventions by the elders in our community. Through that process we have seen how connection to country, truth-telling and sharing of culture can allow people to reconnect. Therefore, I am pleased to see that the state will be progressing Path to Treaty to provide people from all cultural backgrounds with a deeper understanding of a sense of place, a sense of connection and a sense of belonging.

By doing that, we will have a greater understanding of some of the very tough conversations and tough stories that we need to hear through statewide truth-telling so that we can all acknowledge the intergenerational trauma and the impact that it has had on communities. It is important to note that each community is unique in terms of geography, culture, family and connections. I hope that in setting up the institute—and I note the committee's recommendations around language and ensuring that we connect correctly with language—a whole-of-state approach is taken and rather than a South-East Queensland focus.

It is very timely that we are in Cairns, in the Far North. Over the course of the past two years, as a member of this House I have had the absolute privilege of visiting communities in the Far North. We have met with the mayor of Mapoon, the mayor of Mornington Island, the mayor of Yarrabah and the mayor of the Torres Strait. We spoke with those community leaders who are at times frustrated as they feel that their voices and their advocacy are not heard as they deal with the day-to-day leadership of

their communities and the very important priorities of those communities. Today I have heard many members of this House raise those concerns, whether they are members of the crossbench, the government or, in fact, the opposition.

There will be a \$300 million investment in Path to Treaty. That is an enormous figure. It could contribute significantly to not just past healing but also what is occurring right now in communities across this state. Some people do not live in the standard of housing that we would expect in a modern Queensland. Some children cannot access the education or health care that their city counterparts expect. Some young people are not invested in in the same way because of where they reside.

It is important that we throw political correctness out the door when it comes to the point of this bill, which is truth-telling. As part of that, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the truth of the community of Mackay that I live in and serve. I want to acknowledge the very important history of my community, which is intertwined with that of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and it is that of the Australian South Sea islanders. One individual has commented to me, 'Member, they are migrants; they are different.' However, their history in my community of Mackay, the way in which they were brought to this nation and their deep family connections with both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families also need to be told. We need to hear the truth of what occurred in my region and in other parts of Queensland to the Australian South Sea islander community. We need to hear the truth about what Robert Towns and Captain John Mackay did. We need to hear the truth about blackbirding and the intergenerational trauma that it created.

I met the grandson of an Australian South Sea islander who served in the Vietnam War. I heard stories about how he and his Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues, friends and comrades were not permitted to enter the same pubs as white people. He needs to be able to heal and connect not just from the trauma endured in his own culture and background but also from the trauma suffered as he served our nation. Those truths also need to be told. As part of Path to Treaty, I urge the minister and the government to acknowledge the importance of the Australian South Sea islanders' connection to culture and community in areas such as my home of Mackay.

I want to highlight recommendations that the LGAQ made to the committee during its consultation process. Having served as a former deputy mayor, I believe that at times local government and local representatives are best placed to engage and consult. At times they are more trusted than many of us in this chamber or our federal counterparts, because those people work on the ground and deal with priorities and issues every day. They are the ones who are connected. They are family members and leaders. Therefore, when we talk about how committed we are to a process, it is concerning that the committee outlined a lack of consultation and a lack of timeliness. I have spoken to people in my own community who did not even know about or understand Path to Treaty. As a member who represents that community, to be criticised for not speaking openly on our decision on the Voice—I will not have it. We want details. My community and my Aboriginal elders want details too. Nobody has consulted with them on what the treaty means or what the Voice means. While we are a large and diverse state, a commitment of \$300 million should go a long way towards ensuring that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is consulted with in a meaningful and co-designed way. Otherwise, this will be nothing more than lip-service and political correctness that will deliver no outcomes.

As a proud Far North Queensland, I want to see the boys and girls who are in this House watching these proceedings today, as well as the boys and girls from Mornington Island and young people from the Torres Strait have the same opportunities as their white counterparts have right now. While truth-telling and history is important, we must not forget to hear the voices of the young generations of today and listen to what is important to them. That is why we all need to rise above what sometimes is ludicrous politicking, so that we can all make informed decisions. As a representative of my community I am equal to every other member of this House and that is why we are named by our electorates. It is because we represent all people of all cultures and backgrounds in our electorates.

With that, I thank the House. I thank the committee, in particular. I understand that some of the stories heard were quite traumatising. I thank those who contributed. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of Path to Treaty.