




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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PATH TO TREATY BILL

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (4.31 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Path to Treaty Bill 2023. In particular I thank the committee, led by the member for Mansfield, for visiting Wooralinda and Rockhampton in Central Queensland in their review of this bill. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we gather here in Cairns. I also acknowledge the traditional owners and native title holders of the land I represent in this place, the Darumbal and Woppaburra people, and pay respects to their elders. I acknowledge the wonderful Darumbal and Woppaburra elders who live in my electorate. I am so incredibly grateful for their guidance, support and stories. I have learned so much from our elders.

In 2015, shortly after I was elected as the member for Keppel, I requested a meeting with the Darumbal elders to start planning for the future. I wanted to hear from our elders, get to know them, have a yarn and start to build a relationship. I have learned so much from them about the truth, about history, about culture, about our community, about the land and country that we live on. I really do believe it is my role and responsibility in this place to help share that truth and tell that truth. I was shocked to learn some of the truth. I have lived almost my entire life on Darumbal country, yet I had no idea about some of these stories.

I acknowledge Aunty Sally Vea Vea for her work in conservation and land management. She is chair of the Gawula Land Trust and the Darumbal Capricorn Coast mob. Whenever I am around Aunty Sally I just love soaking up her energy and her love and care for country. I also acknowledge Aunty Nicky Hatfield, who is a Darumbal language elder. She spends so much of her time teaching the Darumbal language in our schools and childcare centres. Odette was lucky enough to receive a lesson from Aunty Nicky when she was at day care. It was wonderful to hear my daughter come home from day care one day speaking the Darumbal language to me. It is fantastic that Aunty Nicky puts in so much time, effort and care into transferring that knowledge to the next generation. I also want to acknowledge Aunty Ethel Speedy for her work in suicide prevention in our region and Uncle George James, who is a member of our local ambulance committee and a seriously awesome health advocate.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of Aboriginal people were massacred on the land between Mount Jim Crow and Mount Wheeler in my electorate. This land was used as prime hunting and fishing land by the Darumbal people. It was also a place where different groups met. I supported the Darumbal people in their efforts to rename racist place names in my electorate such as the two mountains between which this massacre occurred. This area between Mount Jim Crow and Mount Wheeler is so important to the local Darumbal people. It was also the subject of numerous Dreamtime stories, which marks this as an area of significant and important local Indigenous cultural heritage. The fact that the name Jim Crow, a place of significant cultural heritage to our traditional owners, refers to racism and segregation was a great shame. As a community representative I was ashamed to have an iconic local place named after racism and segregation. I would much rather have a community that celebrates our Indigenous cultural heritage and diversity and promotes inclusivity. It made me feel sad that people in my community would drive past those two landmarks and be reminded about racism and segregation on a

daily basis, so I believed it was important to work with the Darumbal people to rename Mount Jim Crow to its traditional name, Baga, in the spirit of reconciliation. Mount Wheeler has also now been renamed to its traditional name, Gai-i.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are the two oldest continuing cultures in the entire world, and that is something we as Queenslanders and Australians can be incredibly proud of. Renaming official places their traditional names, which have existed for tens of thousands of years, is in my opinion the right thing to do and a step in the right direction towards reconciliation. I want our local First Nations community to be proud of these iconic natural places, not constantly reminded about the horrible racist and archaic policy of segregation.

It was a few months after the Darumbal people's native title determination in June 2016 that I suggested to Aunty Sally Ve Ve we should consider applying to rename some of the culturally significant places in our community their traditional names. Aunty Sally liked the idea and I suggested we meet to discuss it further. We met for coffee at the Coffee Club in Rocky. I will never forget the afternoon. It was Aunty Sally Ve Ve, Aunty Nicky Hatfield and Aunty Nicky's daughter Christina—three incredibly strong Darumbal people—who told me about Mount Jim Crow and its connection to US segregation laws. To their knowledge, there was no justification on record for the name Jim Crow. I had always assumed Jim Crow was some sort of surveyor or explorer after whom the iconic volcanic plug was named. The Department of Resources confirmed there is no record of how Mount Jim Crow was named; however, there is a possibility the name was used by the US military when they were camped at nearby Artillery Road during World War II.

I have always had a very productive and respectful relationship with the traditional owners of the land that I represent in this place: the Woppaburra people, who come from the land and sea country around Keppel Bay; and the Darumbal people, who are native title holders of all of the mainland area of my electorate. I am incredibly proud and fortunate that all 4,000 square kilometres of the Keppel electorate is now native title determined. I meet with Darumbal and Woppaburra elders and First Nations groups regularly about different initiatives and how I can work with them as their state MP to improve the lives of First Nations people in our community.

Our local Darumbal and Woppaburra elders are treasures. They are passionate but modest people who want the best for their children and grandchildren. They want their history and culture preserved and passed down to the next generation. They have been through some pretty atrocious times. They are from the stolen generation. They have been victims of the worst kinds of racism and treated as second-class citizens for most, if not all, of their lives. Sitting in the Coffee Club that afternoon, Aunty Sally told me how her grandmother told her the story about having to hide behind a tree in the land between Gai-i and Baga when the massacre occurred. It really hit home to me that the trauma that is lived as a result of what happened is still so very raw amongst families. Trying to imagine my grandmother telling me a story about how she had to hide behind a tree to avoid being killed in a massacre where tens of thousands of people were killed really hit home to me that this is still very raw and we need to acknowledge that trauma is still very painful.

Both Woppaburra and Darumbal worked for over 20 years to get native title determination awarded by a consent determination of the Federal Circuit Court: June 2016 for Darumbal and December last year for Woppaburra. I was present at both Federal Circuit Court sittings and at both I witnessed the emotion—the sadness, perseverance and pride all combined in the tears of happiness that rolled down everyone's faces. After the Darumbal native title determination I remember being at the Dreamtime cultural centre. Some women were telling their children, 'Come on, kids, we have to go. It's time to go home.' They were kicking the footy around and they said, 'Mum, why do we have to leave now? We've only just got our land back.' It was beautiful to see the next generation relishing in the fact that their ancestors and elders had worked so hard to achieve that determination that day.

I commend the federal Labor government for progressing reform on the national stage with recognition of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the upcoming referendum for all Australians to consider the inclusion of the Voice to Parliament in the Australian Constitution. The Path to Treaty Bill also marks a momentous time in Queensland's history—a time to right the wrongs of the past and to pave a better way forward for First Nations. It is a special moment in time too for the wider Queensland community to learn a shared history of Queensland and indeed share the benefits generated from treaty-driven knowledge sharing, resource management and service delivery.

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. We must remember the past. We must tell the truth about our state and country's past. Path to Treaty presents an opportunity for all Queenslanders to know and acknowledge our past and set a course for the future that will unify, not separate and divide, so that everyone can progress and prosper together. I commend the bill to the House.