



Speech By  
**Hon. Craig Crawford**


**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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Record of Proceedings, 22 February 2023

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Path to Treaty**

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.00 am): Here in Parliament House, high in the bookshelves of the Members' Reading Room, accessible by a ladder, are the leather-bound tomes of *Hansard*, the official record of proceedings dating back to 1864 and the earliest days of Queensland's parliament. When I was sworn in as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships nearly three years ago, one of my first acts was to climb that ladder in search of the *Hansard* from November 1897. I found what I was looking for and to this very day the debate documented by Hansard has become a personal text of reference. It is the pointer star to the Southern Cross in the moral compass that I bring to my role in office.

One hundred and twenty-six years ago, in this very House where we meet today, our political predecessors debated the now much maligned Aboriginals Protection and Sale of Opium Bill 1897. In simple terms, the bill advocated providing reserves for Aboriginal people, regulating their employment and restricting the sale of alcoholic liquor and opium. Let us consider the words of the Home Secretary at the time, Sir Horace Tozer. Sir Horace said—

And I hope the result of this legislation will be to show the civilised world that however black may be the page of history in Queensland ... there is a bright page to be written, and that bright page will be written ... to ameliorate the condition of the aboriginals.

It is hard to read that debate and not get a sense of the apparent charity and goodwill of the legislators. How misguided would that benevolence prove to be.

The Aboriginals protection act would come to epitomise the most draconian form of social engineering. The act was used to exert strict legal control of the lives and movements of Aboriginal people. Instead of removing the so-called slur and 'black spot' on the history of Queensland, that bill destroyed millennia of rich Aboriginal history, connection to culture, country and custodianship. That debate more than a century ago unleashed a state sanctioned process of dispossession, brutality and violence.

Now, 126 years later, as we sit here today in this same chamber, with the benefit of hindsight and with the arc of destiny beckoning us, the Path to Treaty Bill is our chance to correct the record. This is our moment in time to right the wrongs, to finish unfinished business and to bequeath to our future generations a path forward, a Path to Treaty and a society built on dignity and mutual respect. The Path to Treaty Bill, a landmark bill for this state, will establish the structures that Queensland needs to progress treaties in our state.

We stand at an incredible moment in time and getting this right is important. Through Queensland's Path to Treaty we will honour generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have called for self-determination, truth-telling and agreement making. Together we will collectively learn, share, listen and heal as we hear the truth about our shared histories and how this past has and

continues to impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We will create a partnership that is equal and that affords freedom and power to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, where decisions are made with First Nations peoples and communities, not for them.

Queensland's commitment to a treaty is a collective pledge that is courageous and curious. We will work together in new ways to deliver real change and real outcomes. This is an honest, open and collaborative partnership that sets out a path for true reconciliation. Together Queenslanders can reshape our future. To do this, all Queenslanders are encouraged to join us on the path to treaty, because it is time.