




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

First Nations Peoples

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (9.52 am): I can confirm that Mr Speaker has given me permission to hold a prop for this ministerial statement—and, Mr Clerk, I will not be tabling it.

Yesterday Guugu Yimithirr elder Fred Deeral flew from Cape York to Cairns to exchange with me this gift of a broken-tipped spear. Joined by local traditional owner Gudju Gudju Fourmile, we met for a small ceremony on the banks of the Trinity Inlet, just a few hundred metres from where we sit here in Regional Parliament today.

Fred Deeral, a Wayburr Warra clan leader, who I acknowledge is in the public gallery today, is the son of the first Aboriginal person in Australia to be elected to a state parliament and the former member for Cook—Eric Deeral. Fred is also a direct descendant of the Cape York Aboriginal leader, known simply as the Little Old Man.

In a little known story that I believe marks the true birthplace of the Australian nation, the Little Old Man was the first and only Aboriginal leader to broker peace with then Lieutenant James Cook on his fateful journey of discovery in 1770. On the banks of the Endeavour River, 330 kilometres north of here, the Little Old Man—an elder chosen from the 32 clans of the Kuku Yalanji tribal nation—walked forward with a broken-tipped spear to end a bloody skirmish 253 years ago.

As he did so he performed a ritual, known as ngaala ngundaamay—just as Fred did yesterday, passing his fingers through his armpits, blowing his sweat into the air, calling for protection and peace. Fred said this act ‘gives you a pure heart and mind’. He says, ‘It gives you a safe feeling of being here. It makes anyone’s heart clear.’ It is hard to explain how, but it is true. I found the gesture of that ceremony profoundly moving—it touched my soul.

Yesterday Fred, too, was deeply emotional. His eyes brimming with tears, his chest bursting with pride—proud to represent his ancestor; proud to represent his dad; proud to represent his people; proud to stand for the hopes and dreams, the culture and connection, of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our great state. To hear about that Little Old Man, it struck me how we all stand at a significant intersection of time—and how important our task—as we prepare for the week ahead.

Mr Acting Speaker, this broken-tipped spear is a potent symbol of Australia’s first recorded act of reconciliation. Today, on behalf of the Guugu Yimithirr people, Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk and the Queensland government, I present this gift to the parliament as we navigate this week’s sitting. We may encounter rocky shoals ahead, but if we do so with a pure heart and mind we will meet the arc of our destiny and find the touchstone of true reconciliation.