



Speech By  
**Cynthia Lui**


**MEMBER FOR COOK**

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## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Cost-of-Living Summit**

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (2.41 pm): On 20 March on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait the Palaszczuk government held the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Cost-of-Living Summit. The cost-of-living summit was a direct result of a government that listens and delivers on the needs of the community. During community cabinet in December 2022 our Premier and cabinet ministers had the opportunity to hear directly from local leaders and the community about the cost-of-living pressures in the region. Prior to leaving the Torres Strait, the Premier announced that her government would hold a cost-of-living summit in the region to better understand the challenges communities face across the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area.

I had the wonderful opportunity to co-chair the summit with Minister Mark Bailey and with the support of the Attorney-General and Ministerial Champion for the Torres Strait, Shannon Fentiman, Minister Leeanne Enoch and Minister Mick de Brenni. We invited the three local governments, the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council, Torres Strait Island Regional Council and Torres Shire Council, the Commonwealth through the Torres Strait Regional Authority, as well as key stakeholders and local community. The summit attracted huge interest from the local and wider community with close to 100 participants in attendance from difference sectors. It was important to have strong cross-sector and local representation to gain a broad view of the cost-of-living challenge at hand, and the summit achieved exactly that.

I acknowledge that cost-of-living pressures affect communities right across Queensland. For my communities cost of living is further exacerbated by remoteness. People on low incomes are worse off in these communities and often it is this cohort that pay the highest price when it comes to health and social wellbeing. There are so many different facets to this problem that is putting immense pressure on people's social and economic wellbeing. As we heard at the cost-of-living summit, people in the region are forced to make hard decisions to make ends meet. People are choosing to feed their family over paying rent. They are choosing to travel in boats and often in severe weather conditions—may I add this option is worse for seniors and people with disability, which ultimately means social isolation with a lack of alternative options.

These are only some examples and there are many more stories around this very complex issue. The government is listening. Last week at the cost-of-living summit we announced an \$80 million marine infrastructure package—a state and federal partnership to improve marine infrastructure in the Torres Strait. We announced \$64 million to subsidise freight costs in remote communities. For the Torres Strait, Cape York and gulf communities we are investing \$10 million to build new houses in the region, \$3 million to help families reduce power usage and \$1 million to upgrade the power network to quadruple solar capacity. The announcements that were made at the cost-of-living summit are a true reflection of a government that is listening. Whether you are in the most remote parts of Queensland or in urban areas, this government is sitting at the table with community, we are listening, we are working in close partnership with community and we are delivering on community needs.

I would like to thank our Premier for her support for the Torres Strait and NPA Cost-of-Living Summit. This issue was brought directly to our Premier and ministers during community cabinet and our Premier wasted no time in acting on this very important issue. I would like to thank Minister Bailey, the Attorney-General and Ministerial Champion for the Torres Strait, Shannon Fentiman, Minister Leeanne Enoch and Minister Mick de Brenni for coming to the Torres Strait to help and support the delivery of the summit. Thank you to the local councils, Torres Shire Council, Torres Strait Regional Council and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council, and also a massive thank you to the local community for coming on board and showing true community partnership and for working in collaboration with local leaders as well as the state government to achieve the best outcomes for the region.