




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR COOK

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PATH TO TREATY BILL

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (12.27 pm): Before I begin my contribution, I acknowledge my parents, Getano and Lizzie, in the gallery today. It is wonderful to have them here for such a historic moment in our state's history. 'Trying to heal, while trying to grieve, while trying to live, while trying to dream, while trying to smile, while trying to give love, while trying to be love.' The author of this quote is unknown. I randomly came across this quote this morning. I think it perfectly sums up the journey that was and the journey that we are about to embark upon on our path to treaty. The road ahead is not going to be easy, but together we will get there.

It is an absolute honour and great privilege to rise today to give my contribution to the Path to Treaty Bill 2023. There are no words to describe how proud I am to be part of the government, under the strong leadership of our Premier, Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, to deliver this bill in the best interests of Queensland's First Nations peoples. Today is a clear turning point in our state's history. I am humbled to take part in this very important journey—a journey that will have a long-lasting impact, for many generations to come. I want to again acknowledge our Premier for her support for this very important piece of legislation and for advancing the needs and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs through Path to Treaty. This bill was introduced to parliament by our Premier on 22 February 2023 and referred to the Community Support and Services Committee, a committee I am proud to be part of, for examination and report.

The purpose of the bill is significant in that it establishes foundational legislation on the Path to Treaty. The bill's objectives are: to establish a First Nations Treaty Institute to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to develop a framework and prepare for treaty negotiations with the Queensland government; and to establish a Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry to inquire into and report on the effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

During the course of the committee's engagement process on the bill it became clear that, while the bill's purpose and objectives are straightforward, the importance of the bill to many in the Queensland community cannot be overstated. The committee heard that for First Nations people the bill represents the commencement of the Path to Treaty process—a recognition of First Nations people, self-determination and human rights, lore and law, culture, history, language and traditional lands and waters. In short, the committee heard that the bill represents hope for many Queenslanders.

I speak today not only as a proud member of the Palaszczuk Labor government but also as a proud lamalaig person from the Torres Strait and one of three First Nations members ever elected to the Queensland parliament. This bill is truly one of a kind, so the reflections the committee got to hear from the community about what the bill represents were not surprising—words such as 'it is a positive step in the right direction', 'it is only the beginning of meaningful change' and 'it is about righting the wrongs of the past'. It has also been described as writing a new chapter in our state's history, and it is going to change the narrative of our state. I see this bill as a pillar of hope—one that will carry our hopes, dreams and aspirations into the future.

I want to acknowledge the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Hon. Craig Crawford, for his strong support and commitment not only to this bill but also to all First Nations peoples and communities across Queensland. I especially want to acknowledge my good friend and colleague Corrine McMillan MP, the chair of the Community Support and Services Committee and member for Mansfield. The member for Mansfield has been an incredible champion and has been incredibly supportive in the deliberations on the bill, and I want to personally thank her for her efforts and hard work. I know how much the member for Mansfield was looking forward to today. Unfortunately, she is unable to join us. I want to let the member for Mansfield know that I am thinking of her.

I want to thank the committee members—Mr Stephen Bennett MP, member for Burnett; Mr Rob Skeleton MP, member for Nicklin; Mr Michael Berkman MP, member for Maiwar; and Dr Mark Robinson MP, member for Oodgeroo—our committee secretary, Lynda Pretty, and Hansard for the important role they played in the committee process.

As a First Nations woman, this bill speaks to my past, present and future. It gives recognition to our state's painful past—and, can I say, it is pain that exists to this very day. One of the hardest things throughout the committee process was listening to families tell stories of pain and suffering—stories accompanied by immense emotions—that have been told and passed down over many generations. At our public hearing in Rockhampton we heard a story of mass genocide—a traumatic event in our state's history that was probably told, but I do not think it was ever recognised in the way that it deserved to be. The emotions that were shared on that particular day and right throughout the committee process highlighted the true effects of intergenerational trauma. There are many more stories to be told, and this bill certainly opens the door for deeper meaningful conversations. The establishment of the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry will certainly give more First Nations people the opportunity to come forward and tell their story. Path to Treaty will allow for the stories of my ancestors, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors, to be told and be given the true and genuine acknowledgement, recognition and respect they deserve.

It is important for all of us as Queenslanders to acknowledge our past to enable us to embrace our present. Today Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are challenged in every aspect of society—socially, economically, culturally, environmentally and politically. Path to Treaty opens the door for better relationships to be forged, allowing government to begin the process of deep listening to better understand issues from a First Nations perspective, and to work in strong partnership towards achieving meaningful outcomes and give First Nations peoples a louder voice to speak on matters that are important to them.

I want to quote Cheryl Buchanan, the co-chair of the Interim Truth and Treaty Body, during a public hearing in Brisbane on 13 March 2023. Cheryl stated—

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are still here; our sovereignty was never ceded. Recognising this truth and making the more than 200 years of wrongs right is what this treaty process is all about. We believe the Path to Treaty Bill represents one of Queensland's greatest opportunities to reconcile our challenging past with a hopeful future ... that ensures First Nations people's right to self-determination and to have a real and meaningful say in the decisions that affect our people, our communities, our culture and our country.

We have come a long way and the path in front of us is long. Our journey towards a more unified, inclusive and brighter future starts here with us today. I wholeheartedly commend the bill to the House.