




Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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PATH TO TREATY BILL

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (5.44 pm): Thank you and yura, a Jandai word meaning welcome. Thank you for having me here today. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging and thank them for the beautiful and gentle care that they have taken of the lands, winds and waters that we all enjoy. I rise to speak today to this momentous piece of legislation. What an honour it is to have you in the chair, Deputy Speaker, representing your community of Cook; our first Torres Strait Islander representative to be elected into parliament.

The Path to Treaty Bill will establish the First Nations Treaty Institute to prepare a framework for treaty negotiations with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in treaty negotiations, to provide for the establishment of the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry, to inquire into the continuing impact of colonisation on Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to amend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act 1984 and the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990.

I would like to acknowledge the many people who have come forward and spoken their truth and shared their stories during this hearing process. I was fortunate to substitute for you, Madam Deputy Speaker Lui, in the hearings in Cairns and Weipa. It was a truly humbling experience to hear the truth from local First Nations people. Sadly, for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the truth is not always easy to speak and, frankly, it is not easy to listen to. However, now is the time that we all need to be part of this journey of hearing the truth, of listening to the truth, so that we can learn and partner with our First Nations people to be part of the healing. I thank the Interim Truth and Treaty Body. This amazing group of people has travelled the length and breadth of Queensland. Their tireless work engaging each and every community is so important to each and every community and each and every Queenslanders.

Recently, together with Aunty Becky Thompson, a Quandamooka elder from my community, I hosted a Path to Treaty forum in the bayside. What this forum showed me was that Baysiders are genuinely interested in Path to Treaty, with over 90 people attending from all walks of life and cultures, local church groups, local church leaders, schoolteachers and sporting groups, parents and young people. This diverse group of Baysiders wanted to hear the truth. They want to know how they can be part of the healing and to hear the history of our First Nations people and how western colonisation has impacted on our First Nations people. It was an incredibly humbling and heart-warming experience.

As a little girl at primary school I came home one day and said to my parents, 'Mum, why is the government taking kids away from their parents?' This was during the sixties. It was still happening. My parents did the best they could to explain why this happened. They were appalled. My parents were great people and they taught me a huge sense of justice and opportunity for all. As a consequence, my parents were very actively involved in politics in the Redlands area and did a lot of work with the people on the bay islands.

Growing up I spent a lot of time over on Minjerribah, running around with the kids on the island. Without really knowing it I learned the importance of hearing stories about what happened to families and how they were impacted by people who looked like me and what they did to the people that looked like the local people from Minjerribah. I was fortunate to have such wonderful activist parents who made sure that me and my two sisters had a broad range of experiences so that we could learn the terrible injustices that were happening and had happened.

I was also very fortunate that the teachers at Cleveland State High School were obviously activists because we learned the truth. We were taught the truth of our First Nations peoples and I thank them for that. Truth-telling, healing and voice were as important to me as a little kid running around Minjerribah gathering pipis as they are to me now. I am incredibly humbled to be in a position to vote on this momentous bill.

I acknowledge my friend Corrine McMillan, the committee chair, who is incredibly disappointed that she could not be here. Corrine has been working in this space her entire career. She has changed the lives of many and she has heard the truths of many. I also acknowledge the minister and my colleagues the member for Cook, the member for Bundamba and the member for Algeester as well as, of course, our Premier, Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk, for leading this important piece of work. This week we are about to change history and I am really proud to be on the right side of history. I am really proud to be changing the wrongs of the past and I am incredibly humbled to be a part of this.