




Speech By  
**Jonty Bush**

**MEMBER FOR COOPER**

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### **PATH TO TREATY BILL**

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (5.38 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Path to Treaty Bill and in doing so acknowledge what an historic moment this is. What a privilege it is to be here as part of a government championing this reform, surrounded by colleagues who are such fierce human rights advocates. I feel both a sense of responsibility to uphold my community's values and a sense of honour to be here as a community representative at such an important time.

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, their elders past and present, and I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where I am from, the Yagara and the Turrbal people, and thank the elders and representatives from our traditional owner groups for giving me a deeper understanding of our past and a stronger appreciation for our future.

I thought I would share a couple of local stories to assist with my contribution today. The first story occurred shortly after my election to the seat of Cooper. I was invited to meet with a local gentleman who is a bit of a stalwart in our community. This man is a descendant of one of the first European families who arrived in our community. His family played a large role in shaping our local history and he continues to reside locally today. The story of his family and the contributions they have made are well known. They are well documented with roads, parks and schools sharing his family's name. During this meeting we spoke about the history of our suburb, the people, the industry, the developments and I was struck with the contrast of how well we know and how well we document our local stories from colonisation forward and yet we are desperately missing the stories of the period that precedes that point in time.

The day that we met up was a beautiful day and I remember noticing the line of hoop pines that is plotted out through the mountains and runs down along Waterworks Road. The hoop pines, I have since come to learn, are quite ancient and were used as points of reference for First Nations people to guide the journey from the west of Brisbane to the east. That story by contrast is largely unknown and, like many of the local stories of our First Nations people, they are there but they are incredibly sparse and difficult to locate. This interaction struck me then and the memory is still so clear to me today. It was a moment that demonstrated the grief contained in our past and the opportunity for our future.

History is written by the victors and in the case of modern Australia those who got to write the stories were European settlers who framed the narrative and, in doing so, paused and, in many cases, completely erased the stories of Australia's First Nations people. These stories need to be told fully and truthfully. The impact of colonisation, the intergenerational trauma, the erasure of language and culture, the dispossession of land, the removal of children, these are painful memories to revisit for our First Nations people and they are incredibly confronting stories for non-Indigenous people to hear, but they are our stories and I feel a strong sense of obligation to understand them.

Treaty presents us with an opportunity to reframe the relationship between non-Indigenous Australians and our First Australians. We do not get the opportunity to re-do our past, but we can create a greater future, one based on a shared history and a commitment towards recognition and respect,

renegotiated land rights, cultural protections and a stronger voice. This bill lays out the framework to commence that work through negotiated treaty or treaties and I am proud to be part of a government that is listening and leading.

The second story I want to share occurred the year after my election. It is the story of the Star of Taroom. I will not do it justice in the time that I have, but the ABC has documented the story and I encourage people to hop online and check it out. It is a story of repatriation and forgiveness, a story of how local Ashgrove resident, Johnny Danalis, and his supporters returned an ancient Aboriginal stone, known as the Star of Taroom, to Iman country 45 years after it had been unearthed and removed from its country by a worker on a cattle station in Western Queensland. This worker was, in fact, Johnny's father who later told Johnny about his regret at removing the stone and that it was, in fact, his dying wish to have the stone returned to country and returned to its people. The stone has significant value to the Iman people. I was there with Johnny and hundreds of others, including the member for Greenslopes, on the day that it was returned to the Iman people. Not only was it returned, but Johnny and his team walked the stone, which weighed around 160 kilograms, back along the path that it was taken from, from Brisbane to Taroom, which is about 500 kilometres, talking to people along the way about this act of reconciliation. That moment of people coming together in Taroom to redo those decisions from the past was a moment that I will never forget. The healing that took place through that was palpable. I know that the actions which arise from the passing of this bill will create hundreds of thousands of moments like this for all Queenslanders.

I want to conclude by acknowledging the wonderful community groups, such as Balaangala, who facilitate greater understanding and recognition of First Nations rights and issues and also our local schools, who are showing such leadership in tackling these uncomfortable but necessary conversations of our past and ensuring that our leaders of tomorrow are aware of our and their responsibility to do better. This is an historic moment for Queensland and I commend the bill to the House.