




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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PATH TO TREATY BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (6.45 pm): I speak tonight to support the bill for an act to establish the First Nations Treaty Institute to prepare a framework for treaty nations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to support Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in treaty negotiations and truth-telling. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of Cairns and Far North Queensland and also the Yuwi people from the land where I live.

The students of Kutta Mulla Gorinna Special Assistance School sent me some statements because they wanted to be part of this bill. Kutta Mulla Gorinna Special Assistance School has predominantly Indigenous students. These students are the future of my region. These are the words of teenagers. One said—

This is a step forward. This is a chance for all Queenslanders, Like, exactly as it should be. A step forward with 'coming together'.

Another student stated—

It will be a better future for my kids. The more people that know our ways, they will have a better understanding of our kids.

Another student stated—

First Nations culture is embedded into the everyday life—it has a physical presence in all aspects of community life.

Another said—

Treaty, it's a big emotion to put into words. Its just years and years of—

and then they could not finish it. Some of them call me aunty. Another said to me—

If Aunty is to do it, please don't stuff it up. This is our chance and probably only chance.

Another said—

It would just feel good, you know to be able to have a voice and know that we are being heard.

These are the children, the youth, of my community.

As the Premier said, this is our chance to do what we should have done two centuries ago: to make a treaty or treaties with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There are rare moments in time, perhaps just once in a generation or even once in several generations, when we have the opportunity to be true agents of change. Queensland's Path to Treaty is just such a moment. It is a moment which will define our humanity and our sense of fairness and will be a legacy to leave our children.

We are always talking about breaking the cycle. This is our opportunity to do so. The youth in my community do not want to be listed as statistics because of their indigeneity. They do not want to be overrepresented in the justice system. They do not want to die earlier than other people and they also do not want to have less education than other groups. They want change. They want history to change.

We can only do that by looking back to move forward. In the words of the committee chair, the member for Mansfield, Corrine McMillan—

Queenslanders have a right to know the past and to understand how it affects everything we witness and experience today. The Path to Treaty Bill highlights the maturity of the Queensland Government, under Premier Hon Annastacia Palaszczuk MP, to deal honestly with our state's history and provide the foundation for a path forward.

In my region, the Yuwi Aboriginal Corporation was formed following the Yuwi people achieving consent determination in February 2020 over the Mackay electorate. This is our modern history. What we do know is that in our past history there was widespread violence against Aboriginal people when they resisted white settlers taking their lands in the 1860s and 1870s. We have a Boundary Road, like many other places in Queensland do. This road marks the boundary to keep Aboriginal people from coming into town. There is a statue of an Aboriginal woman running holding her baby outside the Leap Hotel. This woman was hunted by police. She leapt off the hill to try to save her baby. Her baby survived but she did not. Her great granddaughter Debbie teaches young people in our community about our local Indigenous culture. Some years ago I spoke to Debbie and asked her if she was offended by the statue. She said, 'No, we need people to know the terrible story of our local history.'

There is one thing that I have heard from people who do not want to engage and recognise our hard history. It is that we are all the same, that we should not be any different and should treat everyone equally the same—similar to what the member for Hinchinbrook was saying. As Noel Pearson said at the Voice forum at parliament, equality is not giving everybody the same pair of shoes; equality is when you give people shoes that fit. It is time that we made sure everyone's shoes fit so that we can move into our collective future. It is time to gather the stories, treat them with cultural respect and have a mature future for all. I commend the bill to the House.