




Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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### **PATH TO TREATY BILL**

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.33 pm): The path to treaty is going to be complex as it is not a single treaty; it may involve hundreds of treaties between various First Nations people and between First Nations people and the state government that will likely take a long time and significant additional funding to achieve. Path to Treaty must operate with bipartisan agreement wherever possible to ensure the best outcomes for all Queenslanders. In the seat of Gregory there are many Indigenous people who have played a significant role in the economic development of Western Queensland. In the seat of Gregory there are the Iningai people in Longreach, the Mithaka people in the Channel Country and the Pitta Pitta people towards Boulia. They have been involved in the community with me as community leaders in making sure that I am aware of their issues.

In the 2022 *Queensland Closing the Gap annual report* there are numerous examples of Closing the Gap targets that are not being met. In the area of health, a key target is to close the gap in life expectancy within a generation—that is, by 2031. We are not on track to do that. Life expectancy gaps are currently 7.8 years for males and 6.7 years for females. Preventable diseases and the management of chronic diseases remain serious obstacles to achieving this target. Preventable diseases, ranging from heart disease to fetal alcohol syndrome disorders to childhood deafness caused by untreated ear infections, still afflict our First Nations people at a much greater rate. Chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes also inflict a greater toll. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland assessed as developmentally delayed in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census highlights another target that we are not meeting. We are also not on track in significantly reducing suicide among our First Nation Queenslanders. It is the same in education. I have spoken previously in this House, most recently in the debate on the Strengthening Community Safety Bill, about the disproportionate rate of disciplinary absences from school for our Indigenous children compared to our non-Indigenous children.

I also want to talk about housing and the impact of housing in regional Queensland, specifically the impact of our Indigenous housing and maintaining our Indigenous housing. Recently we had major floods in north-west Queensland with flooding down the Georgina River and the town of Urandangi in my electorate suffered severely. In fact, basically the town had to be evacuated and those people from Urandangi are now living in Mount Isa. Some may be living in housing but not all are living in housing but are living on the banks of the river at Mount Isa. They are feeling displaced. Urandangi has a fantastic school and is educating some fantastic primary school students. I have been there and it was heartbreaking to hear that it has not been able to get back to that place that it calls home. I am hoping through this process and what we are supporting that we are able to find pathways—a pathway to make sure that they are not forever displaced and they can go back home. Those young children need to have that education and I commend the education department, especially the principal, for the dedication that they give to those Indigenous children in making sure that they get a good start. We need to ensure that they continue to have some place to call home.

While talking about the issue of housing, the federal Labor government has promised \$200 million to repair and maintain existing homes in Indigenous communities, along with a pledge to build 20,000 new social housing units. However, that \$200 million is to be invested nation-wide and it is not clear how many of the new social housing units will be built in Queensland, let alone made available to our First Nation Queenslanders. Fundamentally, Closing the Gap is meant to achieve a better future for our First Nation Queenslanders, so one of the most important things that we must do is to continue to close that gap.

Along with my LNP colleagues, I will be voting for this bill in the sincere hope that it is a foundation of a better future for our Indigenous Queenslanders and for all Queenslanders. For instance, many Indigenous people in Gregory were unaware of the committee forums that were held such as the forums in Longreach and there was some confusion about that. If we are to build a strong foundation for the future, then this bill must operate in the most practical way that engages people and the purpose it seeks to serve. It must be real and practical in that engagement and it must include our Indigenous people to come along with everybody through government departments. I commend this bill to the House.