




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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PATH TO TREATY BILL

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (2.36 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Path to Treaty Bill 2023. In doing so, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet to discuss this historic bill today, the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji people, the First Australians whose lands, winds and waters we all now share. I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging and I respectfully acknowledge any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people in the parliament or gallery today. I acknowledge my First Nations colleagues, Minister Leeanne Enoch, the member for Algeester; the member for Bundamba, Lance McCallum; and the member for Cook, Cynthia Lui. I acknowledge the significant responsibility they carry within our caucus, parliament and the community to speak on issues such as this and the wisdom they bring to our decision-making as a government. I acknowledge the Community Support and Services Committee for their examination of the bill, particularly the chair, the member for Mansfield, who has so passionately advocated for the passage of this bill. Her presence is missed during this debate.

This bill is a watershed moment in Queensland's history. It responds to calls from generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland for a formal agreement recognising their role as the original custodians of the lands, winds and waters we all now share. It provides a fair foundation upon which to build a reframed relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Queenslanders, one built on honesty.

The bill, in a practical sense, will provide a framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to prepare for and commence treaty negotiations with the Queensland government. It will create a Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry to inquire into and report on the effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The bill acknowledges the impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples never ceded sovereignty over their lands, seas and waters, and their ongoing torment due to dispossession is real and palpable.

Queenslanders have a right to know the past and to understand how it affects everything we witness and experience today. The process of truth-telling will be painful. I believe it will be confronting and I believe we will be the better for it. People often say, 'It is in the past. Why can't we all just move on?' We cannot move on until we truly acknowledge the confronting truth of the past, until we collectively stop and do so, sit in the discomfort that is our collective past and decide what future we want as a country. I want an honest one and I want one that is courageous enough to pursue true healing and truth-telling. You cannot heal until you say sorry. It is true when we say it to our children and it is true for all of us.

There is no doubt that my department has had a long and impactful history in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in Queensland. We must play our part. The department has established a treaty readiness team that has worked across the agency

to develop a departmental treaty readiness action plan to ensure the department is well placed to contribute to the treaty journey in Queensland. As we have this conversation across Queensland, an equally important conversation is taking place federally.

Six years ago, the Uluru Statement from the Heart was delivered to the Australian people. It is one of the most powerful, inspiring and convicting pieces of prose that I have ever read. It was a request from First Nations Australians to all Australians—a road map to peace. It was an invitation to ‘walk together in a movement of the Australian people for a better future’; a transformative and unprecedented constitutional dialogue of Indigenous peoples across Australia, who had been excluded entirely from the Australian Constitution until 1967; a call for voice, treaty and truth; a voice to federal parliament enshrined in the Constitution and a Makarrata commission to supervise the process of agreement making and truth-telling about our history. It was an invitation, and we are yet to respond with integrity and courage.

The upcoming referendum will put the power in the hands of the Australian people to decide what kind of nation we want to be. I believe that we are, and can be, one that recognises and acknowledges the richness of our Indigenous past and the mistakes made as we walk forward with a shared purpose and voice. I believe that we are a nation that has always shown courage when called upon.

My politics are no secret. I am a proud member of the Australian Labor Party and I am proud that we are the only party to support the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full, but this conversation is beyond politics. We cannot change the past, but we can build a better future. I was born on Wiradjuri country, grew up on Larrakia and Ngunnawal country and settled to raise my family on Turrbal country. My mother grew up here in Cairns, witnessing significant intergenerational trauma and poverty amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community—a situation that continues today. This informed her experiences and views and formed the early basis of mine. In grade 4 I had an Indigenous teacher. He would teach us weekly as much Indigenous culture as he would English or maths. I did not realise at the time how rare such an opportunity was. He taught us of the Dreamtime stories, of connection to land and to culture. He taught us of what this country looked like and how trade, language and mutual respect for the land looked before the ghosts came, the guns came and then the missions. It is a history that too few truly understand. It is the history that my children now learn in school, as they should. It is a difficult history, but it must be taught and understood. I am so glad that, alongside it, my children—like I did—are learning of the deep richness and wisdom of the history of the First Australians that we all now share. The truth-telling process here in Queensland will further inform our understanding of that history.

I became involved in politics 20 years ago because I wanted to make a contribution. I wanted to see our community, our state and our country move forward to be the fairest place it could be—where everyone can share in its riches and its opportunities. Now at 42 and a mother, I reflect on what sort of country I want for my two young boys, and I believe it starts with its foundations. This is our chance to do what we should have done two centuries ago: make a treaty or treaties with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As the Premier said so eloquently, these are rare moments in time, perhaps just once in a generation or even once in several generations, where we have an opportunity to be true agents of change. Queensland’s Path to Treaty is such a moment. It is a moment which will define our humanity and our sense of fairness, and it will be a legacy we leave to our children. It is time.