




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Path to Treaty

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (9.57 am): For many decades the notion of treaty has been central to discussions surrounding the goal for a truly reconciled future for this country, a future where the truth of our sometimes ugly, uncomfortable past is understood and acknowledged, a future where the reconciled path forward is forged in a way that recognises the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this country and acknowledges their ancient DNA and connection to these lands, a future where the path forward is enshrined in legislation.

In her momentous speech last week the Premier highlighted the contrast between British engagement with First Nations peoples in North America and New Zealand and the opportunities that were missed for Australia. While treaties were negotiated in other places, none were negotiated here. We know this omission was underpinned by the lie that was terra nullius. It ignored the thousands of generations of First Nations peoples who lived in and cared for this place for over 60,000 years and it set our nation on a course defined by the structural and deliberate exclusion of First Nations peoples through government policies that fundamentally imposed a level of trauma and disadvantage that is still being felt by today's generations.

The historic Path to Treaty Bill 2023 which the Premier will introduce today provides our state with the opportunity to embark on a reconciled future. The bill will establish a First Nations Treaty Institute to develop a framework for treaty negotiations and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to prepare for those negotiations. The bill also sets in train a truth telling and healing inquiry to examine the impacts of colonisation and to facilitate healing. As we take these next steps towards treaty in this state, there is an understanding that the path will not always be comfortable or easy. There will be times when we will need to navigate uncharted waters, there will be moments of clarity and breakthrough and other times of complex challenge.

However, there is also a great deal of hope and optimism that we can face all of this together with a sense of grace and humanity, honesty and courage. The introduction of the treaty legislation represents a significant milestone in our journey. It is a tribute to those who have brought us this far—some who have dedicated their entire lives to this work and some who are no longer with us. It is also a commitment to those who are yet to come. The Path to Treaty Bill is a profound opportunity to courageously reflect on our shared past and, at the same time, boldly and collectively contribute to a sense of who we are as a state into the future.