




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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PATH TO TREATY BILL

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (5.22 pm): The journey on which we are embarking is one that many would say is very long overdue. It is with great pride that I join my colleagues in rising to speak in support of the Path to Treaty Bill 2023, this foundational legislation designed to drive Path to Treaty.

The bill is a response to generations of calls from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland for a formal agreement which recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians of the land, waters and air and provides a just and realistic foundation for a reframed relationship—an agreement that delivers broad-ranging substantive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Queensland community.

As we have heard from other speakers, the bill contains a preamble that recognises numerous aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lore, history, custom and tradition—the ancient history of the place we call home. The principles for administering the bill also include the importance of respecting and protecting Aboriginal lore and tradition and Torres Strait Islander lore and ailan kastom. Aboriginal lore and ailan kastom are designed in the bill as the body of culturally embedded principles and practices which govern traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or groups.

In preparing for Path to Treaty, many government agencies, including the departments I have portfolio responsibility for, have already started doing work. Already they are working towards treaty and establishing truth-telling processes. Queensland Corrective Services has established a Path to Treaty Group, which is being chaired by the First Nations and Cultural Capability Group. They have also established the Murrindhagun Cultural Centre and are employing more and more cultural liaison officers throughout the corrective services network. The Queensland Police Service is also engaged with the Path to Treaty process and just this week has advertised the position of Assistant Commissioner—First Nations. This will be the highest ranking First Nations police officer in the Queensland Police Service and is a great move forward to establishing a partnership between police and communities right across Queensland.

There is also investment from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services with treaty readiness, building on some of the great work that Queensland Fire and Emergency Services has already undertaken with better understanding the connection that First Nations people have with the land through the creation of First Nations bushfire safety officers, using traditional burning as a way of mitigating the risk of bushfire. There is much for us to learn about this ancient land and the peoples who connect us to the very beginning of time. It is about time we started listening more and acting more.

Let's get to the heart of the matter. Let's get to what we in this parliament now have the opportunity to achieve. There is a notion often quoted that justice never sleeps. It is an uplifting notion based on the assertion that, no matter the passage of time, it is never too late for justice to be done. It is never too late for justice to be seen to be done. It is never too late to give someone a voice. It seems to me that this notion applies when we discuss our history and the impact of that history on First Nations

people. It is a history with dark undercurrents—a history that, when read by those who dwell in our modern era, can be very confronting. But we should never hide from the truth. We should never deny the truth. We need to show that we can handle the truth.

St Augustine admonishes us to never use the truth to cause injury to another, but I would add that we can also cause injury to another by avoiding the truth. We can cause injury to others by hiding from the truth. Worst of all, we can cause injury to another by denying the truth. We would risk committing all of those sins, in my view, if we were not to proceed with the truth-telling. We would risk committing all of those sins if we were not to proceed down the path to treaty. Justice never sleeps. It is time for an awakening and it is time for justice to be done and time for justice to be seen to be done. It is time for First Nations people to have a proper voice. It is time for the truth-telling to begin. It is time for truth and justice.

Truth and justice can and should be our moral beacons. Truth and justice can be the shining lights that show us the way down the path to treaty. It is time to right the wrongs. It is time for all people of goodwill to come together. It is time for people of goodwill to lay bare the truth. It is time for members to be genuine about it rather than joke about it. It is time for people of goodwill to walk together down the path to treaty. I commend the bill to the House. I encourage all members to support it. I did not call out the member, but I request that all members treat this debate with respect and acknowledge the contributions everyone is making as heartfelt and genuine—

Mr Stevens: Talk to your mob about it.

Mr RYAN: It is a reflection on the character of the member who was interjecting, not the character of those who are conducting themselves in a way that is respectful to this debate. I commend the bill to the House.