




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

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PATH TO TREATY BILL

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (5.28 pm): I rise to contribute to this momentous debate of the Path to Treaty Bill 2023. I could not think of a better place to be right now than Tropical North Queensland. I thank the people of Cairns for hosting us and thank my parliamentary colleagues the members for Cairns, Cook and Barron River and, of course, Mr Speaker, the member for Mulgrave, for inviting us to their beautiful part of the world.

As we have heard, the objectives of this bill are: to establish a First Nations Treaty Institute, a new statutory body to support the development of a framework for treaty negotiations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Queensland government; and to establish a Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry. The inquiry will run over a three-year period to inquire into and officially record the individual, family, cultural and societal impacts of colonisation on First Nations people from Queensland, with an added focus on public awareness and education to help us better understand and share in First Nations culture, history, languages and truths. I look forward to hearing more about all the terms of reference as they are developed.

I have had some really positive feedback about Path to Treaty from Kurwongbah locals, recognising the significance of this moment in our history books. I echo the Premier's sentiments that story is everything. I am incredibly proud to be part of this chapter in this story by speaking on this bill this evening. It is just not possible to isolate our story in Queensland from the global and national context of reconciliation. Next year will mark a century since the Indian Citizenship Act became law in the United States and there are now hundreds of treaties across that country. New Zealand is approaching two centuries since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, establishing a partnership between the Maori people and the state. The rights of Aboriginal peoples of Canada were affirmed in its Constitution more than 40 years ago, with its history of treaties dating back to the 1700s. In 1967 there was a referendum that changed Australia's story, removing discrimination against First Nations peoples from the federal Constitution. The 'yes' vote in 1967 was over 90 per cent, and that happened under a Liberal government. In 2008 then Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd delivered the apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples—another proud moment in our history.

At the national level, we are now having a conversation about enshrining a Voice to Parliament in the Constitution. I am definitely not an expert on constitutional law, but the concept seems pretty simple to me. There will be a group of people—the Voice—that will provide advice to the federal parliament on proposed laws and policies affecting the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. I am not buying the arguments that it is too complicated or that there is not enough information. I reckon that that is a cop-out, a way to hold off declaring your hand and explaining why you are voting no to the people that you represent.

I personally find it difficult to understand the motivation for voting no. As someone who shares a constituency with Peter Dutton, who is advocating a no on behalf of the federal Liberal National Party, I am really disappointed in the missed opportunity for bipartisanship on this crucially important issue. When the question is put to us in the referendum later this year, I hope the compassion of the Australian

people, our appreciation for cultural differences and our spirit of mateship shines through with another overwhelming 'yes' vote in support of our traditional owners. I encourage the other federal MP whose electorate overlaps mine, the member for Longman, to be a leader in his community in this important step of our journey of reconciliation. Sadly, he has been silent so far.

I hope our Path to Treaty journey here inspires more Queenslanders to open their hearts and listen to the stories of First Nations people—those who have experienced and are experiencing the trauma, both firsthand and vicariously, of separation from family, from culture and of stolen wages, of being treated like second-class citizens, a peoples who continue to experience significant and unacceptable differences in life expectancy, health and education outcomes and overcrowding in homes. It is probably going to be hard to hear some of the stories that will be told through the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry, but it is important that we do. Together we can do better. That is what Path to Treaty is about. That is what enshrining a Voice is about.

I want to acknowledge my colleagues the member for Cook, the member for Bundamba and Minister Enoch for being role models. The member for Cook, someone that I am proud to call my friend, is the first ever elected member of parliament to come from the Torres Strait Islands and I could not be more excited about visiting with her soon in the coming weeks to examine transport infrastructure. I commend this bill to the House.