



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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**BRISBANE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES ARRANGEMENTS AND
OTHER LEGISLATION BILL**


 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (10.37 pm): I rise to make my contribution on the omnibus bill. I have to confess at the outset that I am a little horrified to have to speak on this legislation and I do so as my first speech of the 58th Parliament with a sense of almost morbid disbelief that this will be the first act of an LNP government. I am especially horrified that, despite every opposition member at the time having supported the passage of the Path to Treaty Bill, they are now so eager to undo the progress we have made that we are expected to pass this repeal bill in a single day, without any opportunity for the parliament to hear directly from First Nations communities or the broader community. That is not to say that First Nations communities and leaders have not fought tooth and nail to make their voices heard because they have. However, this LNP government is actively shutting down Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices at every opportunity.

Exhibit A is the way they have absolutely trashed process to smash this bill through in a day. I understand that there is probably a much longer history than I am aware of where either side try to justify their own procedural excesses on the basis of what the other party did before, but this is a whole new level. This is literally their first act. We have four more years to see just how low they are prepared to stoop and trash this institution which they purport to respect so deeply. What a crock.

That approach, though, is perfectly consistent with the intent of this bill, which is to shut down the path to treaty, shut down the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry and shut down the First Nations Treaty Institute. Others have made the point in this debate, but it bears repeating: if this legislation itself were not disrespectful enough, both in its substance and in the way it is being smashed through parliament, let's take a moment to note that the bill was introduced with no notice to the chair of the inquiry. The minister could not even pick up the phone. Not only that, it has been introduced and will be passed on the same day that some of our brightest young Indigenous youth leaders are here for the Eric Deeral Youth Parliament. It is disgraceful.

It is such a disgraceful message to those young leaders of tomorrow and such disgusting respect for the chair and the other staff of the inquiry and the institute. They are just the people that this bill directly touches. I want to take a moment to quote the chair of the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry, Joshua Creamer, who said—

The Crisafulli government might like to think it can stop the truth from being told but the truth of their disrespect towards Queensland's First Nations Peoples and communities cannot be hidden.

It is in plain view for everyone to see. Let's be clear, though—the LNP cannot and will not silence First Nations peoples and communities who are expert storytellers. Storytelling is so deeply embedded in Indigenous culture that the government cannot possibly expect that they are going to wipe it away with this one repealed bill. No matter how hard they try, they cannot stop the tide of truth.

As dire as this is, I think we should take some hope, some consolation from the communities and independent institutions that are maintaining their own truth-telling forums. Nonetheless, this is an enormous blow. It is an extraordinary lost opportunity, especially to hear from elders who have lived through the White Australia policy and struggled for justice. Theirs are the stories that we need to hear if we are to understand the way our current policies perpetuate those injustices.

I took a moment earlier today to just reflect on the first actions of the Newman government. My colleagues in the office of climate change and I were understandably more focused on the canning of the office of climate change. They shut that down overnight. The now environment minister, who was the then environment minister, put on the public record at the time that he was not in fact convinced that humans were having an impact on the changing climate, but that is by the by. I think their first act in government was to can the Queensland Premier's literary awards. In reading through one of those articles, I read some comments from Uncle Sam Watson when he was commenting about the cutting of the Unaipon Award for unpublished Indigenous writers. It really hit me in the guts to read those words from Uncle Sam and to reflect on the fact that, 12 short years later—

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. My point of order relates to unparliamentary language. We have discussed that before. I ask that the member for Maiwar withdraw that.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): I will take some advice. Member for Logan, I do not need your assistance or commentary while I am taking advice. Member for Maiwar, the terminology you used has previously been considered as unparliamentary language. I would caution you, please, to refrain from using similar language in the remainder of your contribution.

Mr BERKMAN: Certainly. I felt a really visceral reaction not just remembering Uncle Sam and the powerful activist and advocate he was but also reflecting on the fact that he is not with us. Even if this inquiry were to go ahead, we have lost the benefit of his experience as a fighter. It lands on me because of all of the conversations I have had with other elders and heard them express the pain and anguish they feel about the fact that they have lost so many of their old people while there is so much unfinished business left to deal with.

Every year that this government is prepared to backslide on First Nations justice and pull off disgraceful moves like shutting down this inquiry is another year that we lose those stories, we lose that history. How many old people must we lose before we get the chance to hear their stories? The inquiry is established. It is on foot. There is nothing lost by allowing it to continue—yet this cruel, despicable move is going to cut it short for no reason.

Truth-telling is not in and of itself divisive. Sure, it is uncomfortable. It is supposed to be. It is inevitably going to be uncomfortable, given the dark, violent and racist parts of our colonial history here in Queensland. But what does cause division is the denial and the perpetuation of that injustice, the intergenerational trauma and the disadvantage. That is what causes division in communities.

With the repeal of the Path to Treaty Act, the LNP has denied us the opportunity for as many Queenslanders as possible to tell the truth and to hear the truth. The LNP has denied us as a community the opportunity to learn, to show respect for those stories and to recognise what we can learn from First Nations peoples and cultures, and our own history as a state, so that we can do better. It is not about making anyone feel bad. It is not about division. It is about learning so that we can do better. In a time of such deep and worsening environmental and social crises, we should be listening to, respecting and learning from the wisdom of First Nations leaders.

The LNP have been explicit—they do not want to hear from First Nations people. They only want to tell them what is good for them. This is the same disgusting paternalistic attitude that underpinned the barbaric policies of assimilation and child stealing and policies that led to mass stolen wages and excessive control over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's lives.

The minister spoke before, and countless other members have spoken, about how they want to redirect the treaty funding into other programs, as if we cannot possibly fund a truth-telling and healing inquiry at the same time as funding other practical and measurable initiatives to close the gap. What utter tosh! I have never heard a bigger load of rubbish in here, or are they really that lacking in vision and that hopeless that they do not think we can do two things at once? It is rubbish and it is nothing more than a false justification for this government to blithely pursue its racist agenda.

What does one say about our new Premier's disgracefully two-faced approach to this whole issue? Decency and respect—I have never seen anything more lacking in decency and respect than his approach to this, the confected sincerity on the debate of this bill. This man either has no principles that he is prepared to stand by and talks out both sides of his face or is just weak as water and is going to capitulate to the racist directions coming down from Peter Dutton and the federal party.

We have to be clear-eyed about the fact that both the federal party and the state party are pretending that the Voice referendum and the outcome are somehow a proxy vote for supporting whatever racist policy they want to push through. They are not. It was a discrete question and it was blown up out of all proportion by divisive misinformation and disinformation. To use that outcome now as the thin end of the wedge for this kind of disgraceful racist policy is beyond the pale.

No-one in this chamber can plead ignorance to the profound impacts of colonisation on First Nations people and the profound and enduring consequences of government policies that continue to deny the rights of First Nations people and communities. They would plainly rather that no-one talk about it so that they can keep using young First Nations kids as political footballs instead of affording them the safety and wellbeing they deserve so that we can have real, enduring community cohesion and safety for all.

I have not even touched on the work health and safety changes. I will keep my comments brief. It should be so plain to everyone here that the reintroduction of notice periods for entry into a workplace can only make workplaces less safe. There is no other way to interpret it. It will make workplaces less safe and it will cost lives, and none of us here is going to take any pleasure in the hand-wringing over that side when we see those consequences play out.

The first act of this 58th Parliament is an absolute stain on the institution. It is a stain on this party. Each and every one of them deserves to feel ashamed that this is their first act in government. It is absolutely disgraceful, and the new Premier is not even here to watch it all happen. I withdraw. One would not want to be found to fall foul of standing orders. My apologies, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will leave it there.