



Speech By  
**Peter Russo**


**MEMBER FOR TOOHEY**

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## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **Path to Treaty**

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (7.27 pm): Tonight I want to talk about treaty and the withdrawal of support for treaty by the opposition. It was a blatant political manoeuvre shown by the opposition when it withdrew support for the truth-telling and treaty processes in Queensland. This abandoning of support for First Nations people and their communities speaks to its own shortcomings. It is a dog whistle to the most hateful and deliberate ploy to appeal to those with barely disguised bigotry.

Since July 2019 Queenslanders have participated in a journey to bring about change—a journey towards truth, healing and reconciliation with its First Nations people. These are important steps to take and, as late as May 2023, we had a common purpose to lead everyone in Queensland towards a better understanding. We had bipartisan support in this House to take steps to heal the injustices of the past. The act reflects the importance of finding the truth. It provides for the establishment of a Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry. These are matters of profound moral and ethical significance. Our Path to Treaty places significant emphasis on sharing information. It is time we shone a light on the historical injustices faced by First Nations people. Telling the truth should never be used so flippantly as a mere political bargaining chip. The opposition has demonstrated it is literally willing to play with people's lives, and that is the reality of its decision.

We can view the Path to Treaty Bill 2023 through the same lens as former prime minister Paul Keating viewed his government's Native Title Act 1993. He has written about the Howard government's 1998 amendments which mercilessly attacked the 1996 High Court decision in the Wik case. Paul Keating said those amendments cut across the spirit of the Keating government's 1993 act and the notion that the legislation was, first and foremost, of a beneficial kind enacted to redress historic inequities rather than to compound ones sanctioned by earlier acts. This is how I view our Path to Treaty Bill 2023. We need to hear about the historic inequities—to hear the truth—rather than to compound these inequities sanctioned by earlier acts. It is now almost 30 years since the 1996 Wik High Court decision. The connection between First Nations people and the land still continues to be railroaded by the economic interests of mining companies. Our First Nations people still face inequities and misunderstanding. It is disheartening to see the depths to which the opposition stoop to deny our First Nations people their rightful place.