



Speech By  
**Stephen Andrew**


**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2024

**MOTION**

**Path to Treaty**

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (4.28 pm): I move—

That this House:

1. notes that nearly 70 per cent of Queenslanders voted 'no' in the federal 'Voice' referendum—the highest 'no' vote of any state or territory in the country.
2. notes that the government currently has no mandate for negotiating or entering into binding treaties with groups appointed to represent Queensland's tribal peoples.
3. calls on the government to immediately refocus its time and energy and resources helping vulnerable Queensland households, families and workers faced with one of the worst cost-of-living crises in the state's history.

I rise to speak to the motion circulated in my name. On 14 October 2023 Queenslanders turned out in their millions to deliver the biggest no vote in the country at almost 70 per cent. Out of 30 federal electorates in Queensland only three voted yes, and these crossed the elite confines of the green, wealthy inner-urban seats of Brisbane. In Capricornia, however, which encompasses the electorate of Mirani, 81 per cent voted no, with some booths returning a no vote at over 90 per cent. That is 90 per cent. Even working-class and regional electorates held by Labor including Ipswich, Logan, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns voted no in overwhelming numbers. The Premier's own electorate crosses the boundaries of two federal electorates, both of which voted no. If that does not tell Labor how much it has lost touch with its own voter base, then I do not know what will.

Despite all this, the government believes it still has a right to completely ignore the will of its own constituents. The sheer scale of the yes campaign's defeat should have told Labor right then and there that any plans for treaty making are now at an end. Instead, the Miles government is doubling down on its plans for a state-based treaty system. In doing so, Labor is basically telling Queenslanders, 'We don't care what you think and we're doing it anyway.'

I opposed the Path to Treaty Bill from the outset mainly due to the lack of details contained in the bill as to what this treaty process would entail. Since then more details have been released about the process. A *Courier-Mail* article on how treaty will work states that after three years of truth-telling hearings—

... The inquiry could lead to financial reparations, health reforms and curriculum changes by the state government as part of landmark treaty negotiations with Queensland's First Nations groups.

The government has already set up the First Nations Treaty Institute along with a framework for negotiating and signing treaties on behalf of the Queensland people. According to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, 100 separate treaties could be negotiated depending on how many Indigenous groups come forward. That is 100 separate treaties.

The government has absolutely no mandate for any of this. No mention was made of treaties during Labor's 2020 election campaign—none that I could find at any rate. Besides that, Labor could hardly claim mandates for treaty signing on the basis of an election held four years ago. After last year's referendum result, it has zero mandate for forging ahead with one now. Such radical changes should not be introduced without the consent and the support of the Queensland people. There are also the other people, the tribal people.

The Premier needs to take the treaty proposal to the next election and let Queenslanders decide for themselves whether or not they want it. Meanwhile, the roads in Queensland are a disgrace. There are people marching in the streets every time we come to parliament because they are not happy with the way things are going here. The price of Queensland's steel-making coal has fallen 25 per cent. Royalties are down. Queensland's share of GST is down. The population is exploding. Current forecasting shows the state's total non-financial public sector borrowings could reach as much as \$188 billion by the 2027-28 financial year. The Treasurer then went on to proudly state—

Our government will use debt to provide the cost-of-living relief that Queenslanders deserve. We will use debt to deliver the infrastructure that our growing state demands and we will use debt to reduce inflation and increase the productivity of Queensland's economy.

He then invited members to ask him any questions they like. I have a question for the Treasurer. If debt is so wonderful and cost free, why are struggling Queenslanders still paying billions in state taxes each year? The government obviously does not need taxes anymore; it can just use debt instead!

It is ludicrous to suggest that the government can keep piling on more and more public debt. The people out there—I spoke to the Wiri today. The government is doing nothing to help them. They do not want top-down management. They have seen it all before. They just want to work with the government to get to where they want to go as do all the people in Queensland. We should be restructuring everything to make it viable for everyone—for the struggling mums and dads, the families, the workers, the small businesses that are setting up tonight. Everyone needs their fair share at the moment, otherwise there will be no money to pay for anything.

Let's do the right thing here. All I am asking for is us as a government and us as parliamentarians to do our job, and including everybody in what is happening at the moment is very difficult. People in my electorate are going backwards \$400 every week. These are mums and dads who are working. We should be giving everyone a hand instead of just piling it all into something. When we are in a position to do it at some other time, that is fine, but not at the moment.

Now is the time to be backing our people in the state, making sure we do our job as a government and making sure we do our job as parliamentarians.