



Speech By
Hon. Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Torres Strait, Women's Shelters

 **Hon. AJ CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (Minister for Families, Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Child Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (2.41 pm): I note today we have visitors from the Torres Strait. They are incredible women who are participating in the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation leaders' course. I was privileged to participate in that program alongside other members sponsored by the Torres Strait Island Regional Council. It is an incredible program and I wish them every success.

About 10 days ago, it was a real privilege to be in the Torres Strait with my colleague the Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister O'Connor. While there we met with the Remote Indigenous Women's Shelter Network, after meeting them in Cairns. We sat with them for several hours and heard about the challenges faced across our discrete communities. We heard about the inadequate funding that they had received over the past decade. I could not believe that they had had no gas for more than 10 months and bathrooms had been boarded up for several years. There are water leaks. There has been no maintenance. There are no locks on windows, doors or gates. Those are our women's shelters. Just because they are in the Far North they should not be forgotten. I use the example that if these things happen in Brisbane they would be fixed within hours. It was great to have the minister there. I was pleased that we were able to get the gas turned on within 24 hours.

We are now working with the Lena Passi Women's Shelter. Their lease expired in 2022 and the former Labor government did nothing. We are sorting that out. There is a lack of basic services. I note the queue that they are in with QBuild after 18 months. The minister and I discovered that, because no funding was allocated by the previous government, no investment has been made in remote shelters for many years. That affects, in particular, the impact that they feel on the back of natural disasters. Challenges include the general layout of the shelter, security, poor infrastructure in general and nil CCTV coverage. The location of the shelter is widely known across the small island community. The saving grace, which they shared with us, is that they are near the police station. There is no air conditioning because it is too expensive to run and maintain. This is not good enough. I will be working very closely with the Minister for Housing to ensure that not just the Lena Passi Women's Shelter in the Torres Strait but all women's shelters in the cape are fitted out to a standard that ensures the safety of women and children and that ensures they are operational during natural disaster season. Sadly, many shelters have been locked up for months on end due to poor maintenance.

I acknowledge the incredible work of the Mura Kosker Sorority. We met with members of the sorority that afternoon. I thank them for their hospitality. We heard very clearly about the challenges they have with their travel budget. The challenges of remote travel that they have to undertake are significant. We also met with the mayor and the council and spoke about home ownership and the opportunities that we see for locals in the community, which is very exciting. I congratulate the new CEO of the Torres Strait Island Regional Council on her appointment. They have a big vision and we look forward to working with them.

I take this opportunity to highlight an announcement that I was very proud to make and that is a first in Queensland. Along with the domestic violence peak, we are bringing forward work led by the Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network and I met with them in Mackay on Monday morning. The Crisafulli government is committed to investing in the First Nations primary prevention group, chaired by Wynetta Dewis. We are also ensuring funding and ongoing support for the Remote Indigenous Women's Shelter Network, under the leadership of Karen Dini-Paul. We are committed to ensuring that there is real investment in building capacity in the sector to ensure that solutions led by First Nations community elders are able to be resourced and put in place. Over the next five years our government will make a significant investment into both organisations. I look forward to working closely with them to deliver Closing the Gap outcomes.