



Interim Truth and Treaty Body call for the Queensland Government to stay committed to Truth and Treaty

Since July 2019 Queensland has slowly and carefully been proceeding on a path towards truth and healing and an ultimate reframing of the relationship between the State and its First Nations Peoples through treaties. This process has been done in consultation with First Nations Peoples, and engagement with the wider community.

At all points along the journey, the Queensland Government and Premier Palaszczuk have acknowledged this would be a long process, requiring strength and foresight and that the path would not always be easy. This was embodied in the Statement of Commitment first signed by the Premier on 14 July 2019 and reaffirmed on 16 August 2022.

In May 2023, legislation to implement a Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry and establish an Institute to support First Nations communities hold discussions with the State, passed the Parliament with the bipartisan support of the LNP opposition. Now the LNP has removed its support to Truth-telling and treaty based on the Voice referendum result. In response the Premier has stated that the Truth-telling and Healing would proceed and noted that ultimately treaty-making would require bipartisan support.

The LNP decision is a deep disappointment, a complete reversal of its previous position and a profound mistake. It displays a weakness in leadership and timidity of spirit.

There are varied reasons why the Voice referendum was rejected but both Yes and No campaign advocates had emphasised the crucial importance of addressing the intractable economic and social disadvantage experienced by First Nations Peoples compared to the wider Australian community.

The Queensland Path to Treaty, with its central focus on firstly building community understanding of the impacts of colonisation on First Nations Peoples and the reasons why disadvantage continues to be experienced by First Nations communities is structured to bring Queensland on a shared journey. Treaties would only occur after this shared understanding was built and agreement reached on how best to empower First Nations communities to improve life outcomes.

The treaty process is a long-term commitment that will extend over the life of several Parliaments and almost inevitably the terms of different governments. To tackle deep seated and intergenerational disadvantage and to empower First Nations communities through treaties to achieve outcomes matching those secured by the community requires political leadership. Given the timescale, a future LNP government will need to face this responsibility to lead. Bipartisanship at times will be essential.

The recently enacted *Path to Treaty Act 2023*, creates two bodies- the First Nations Treaty Institute and the formal Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry. The Institute is intended to do much of the groundwork to support First Nations communities and the wider Queensland community to become informed and supported for potential future treaty discussions. It will work hand in glove with the formal Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry. The Institute will play a critical role in local truth-telling activities in conjunction with local museums, libraries, and galleries. Its truth-telling function is ongoing and not time limited compared to the three-year period of the formal Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry.

The Interim Truth and Treaty Body has been working since the passage of the legislation on preparing for the commencement of the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry and the opening of the First Nations Treaty Institute. This work is advanced, and the next step will be the government opening expressions of interests for appointment to the Institute Council and secondly experts to conduct the formal Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry. We hope that these appointments are finalised by the end of 2023.

Given Queensland will be elevated on the world stage for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the process of Truth, Healing and Treaty cannot become a political plaything. Not a pawn in a fruitless cultural war. But seized as an opportunity to build a better, fairer and stronger Queensland where the



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State's First Nations Peoples can enjoy equal life chances and the State benefits from the world's oldest continuous cultures and knowledge.

To our First Nations leaders and communities, we acknowledge you may be hurting and feeling a deep sense of rejection. We encourage all to hold each other up and be sensitive in your discussions over the coming days.

Quotes:

Mick Gooda:

"I feel a sense of profound disappointment at the LNP decision. If Voice was not the right way forward, and now the path to treaty is not the right way forward, then what is the solution? If we are seeking to revisit reconciliation, you can't have reconciliation without our voices being heard, without the truth being told, and without an agreement through treaty about what our future looks like."

Sallyanne Atkinson:

"I am surprised and disappointed. It is a wrong and dangerous assumption that because Queenslanders voted No in the Voice Referendum, they do not support Truth and Treaty. Treaty and Voice are very different. I believe Treaty is a big hope for Queenslanders' futures and broken promises makes moving forward together more fractious".

Seleena Blackley:

"In light of the recent "No" outcome from the referendum, the LNP's withdrawal of support for Treaty in Queensland is yet another blow to our young First Nations peoples. Treaty is a chance for new opportunities, for social equity, for First Nations young people to take the baton from our elders and to lead the way forward. Without a way forward, where does this leave future generations? The backflip on support from the opposition has created an obstacle that is now in the path of our young people, but we are not prepared to stop."

Michael Lavarch

"It is critical now for the Palaszczuk government to continue with its strong leadership on truth, healing and treaty. The *Path to Treaty Act 2023* is innovative and careful legislation that offers Queensland a way to increase community understanding about our shared history and the role of First Nations Peoples. It builds an architecture that offers a path forward to a better Queensland."

Further information:

The ITTB is an independent body that engages with the Queensland Government and communities to continue momentum while the First Nations Treaty Institute and the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry are established.

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