



19 October 2023

Statement from Queensland Human Rights Commissioner Scott McDougall on the future of the Path to Treaty in Queensland

Queensland's political leaders need to immediately stop walking back commitments to treaty in the wake of the weekend's referendum result.

We're all aware of Queensland's rejection of a specific model of constitutional recognition and representation.

By now we should all also be aware of the deep grief and sense of isolation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities are feeling as a result.

First Nations leaders have called for a week of silence, which I respect, and I would urge our political leaders to do the same.

The referendum results will be dissected and discussed at length in the coming weeks and months, and until this happens we cannot properly understand either the results themselves or their implication for the future of reconciliation and of treaty. Analysis will no doubt focus on the cause of the rapid loss of support for the Voice since polls showed majority support for the proposal, including in Queensland.

Instead, some sweeping assumptions appear to have been made about the referendum results, their causes, and what they mean for Queensland.

Opposition Leader David Crisafulli this morning said that in the days following the referendum it has 'become clear' that 'the path to treaty will only create further division', and that the LNP will not pursue one if elected to government.

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk has since stated that treaties 'would require bipartisan support'.

Now is not the time for rash decision-making but rather a time for proper reflection, for consultation, and for some deep listening to community.

Racing to interpret the referendum results as an overall rejection of reconciliation and treaty is dangerous and short-sighted.

Such an approach risks throwing away decades of work toward reconciliation.

Treaties are, by definition, agreements between parties. It seems nonsensical to suggest that the pursuit of an agreement could be described as divisive.

More importantly, it is the responsibility of governments and of leaders to lead.

Leadership means listening, but it also means showing moral responsibility and a willingness to lead positively and constructively.

Leadership means truth-telling about our past and about where we need to go in the future – something both leaders have previously said themselves was an important part of Queensland’s path to treaty. It means bringing communities along with us when we tell those truths, and helping them to listen.

Treaty is an opportunity – not only for truth telling but to address past and ongoing injustices, to build true cohesion and community, and to help create a Queensland where the human rights of First Nations people, including their rights to maintain their culture and knowledge, are truly valued and respected.

In the wake of the weekend’s results treaty is an opportunity Queensland must take, and it’s one only the most cynical among us could see as divisive.

- **ENDS**

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