

Joint Media Statement QPS First Nations Advisory Group, Supporters and Allies

October 26, 2023

Response to Ian Leavers' opinion article regarding Treaty and justice reform in Queensland

Today we, the First Nations Advisory Group to the Queensland Police Service, and a collective of supporters and allies stand united in our dismissal of the outwardly racist ideology expressed by Queensland Police Union President, Ian Leavers in the Courier Mail. We stand with the thousands of Qld Police Employees and members of the public who are appalled by the comments of the President of the Police Union.

The Queensland Police Union Presidents' statements are nothing short of reinforcing negative racial stereotypes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These statements politicise the truth and treaty process as a means for spring boarding a personal campaign that is negligent and outwardly harmful to the wellbeing and interests of our First Nations peoples and communities, and to the reconciliation efforts of our nation. The Queensland Police Union Presidents' factually inaccurate, inflammatory and fear mongering comments do not reflect who we are, and who we aspire to be as people in this state of Queensland. These racialised and divisive comments should be condemned in the strongest terms.

The Queensland Police Union President has through his comments bought into question whether he is a fit and proper person for the role of General President and Chief Executive of the Queensland Police Union. We call on Mr Leavers to resign.

We call on the QPU, QPS leadership and QLD Government to take all necessary steps to ensure they lead from a place of truth telling and accountability. We call on the members of the Queensland police union who do not align themselves with these comments to speak up.

The Queensland Police Union President has demonstrated his willingness to be gravely irresponsible and use his position and platform to advance personal ideas that renowned criminologists and researchers have confirmed are not based in evidence. The Queensland Police Union President has through his comments undermined the incredibly complex and challenging role of police to develop trusting and culturally safe relationships with communities and has harmed communities and the community confidence in the Queensland Police Service.

The Queensland Police Union Presidents' comments have seen him deny the evidential 'truth' that was demonstrated in the Commission of Inquiry that racism, sexism and misogyny exist in the Queensland Police Service in favour of spreading misinformation and inciting a racial divide. The Queensland Police Union has a vital role in supporting QPS staff in providing a safe workplace for its members and to advocate for an environment free from racism, sexism and misogyny, ensuring that staff are adequately supported, trained and resourced to undertake the incredibly challenging role of culturally safe policing in Queensland. This includes culturally safe policing responses that will break the cycle of discriminatory stop-and-search measures, arbitrary arrests, excessive use of force, at times leading to death. The Queensland Police Union Presidents' comments detracts from this vital role of the Police Union.

The 'real truth' of crime committed by young people is that they themselves are likely to have been victims of crime and are much more likely to have experienced trauma causing a disengagement from education, family, and community. They are more likely to be homeless or are couch-surfing. These are our forgotten children.

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. 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 of truth telling, understanding and healing. Treaties are agreements that can only occur after this shared understanding is built and agreement reached on how best to empower First Nations communities to improve life outcomes. This is a joint effort to shape a future we will all be proud of.

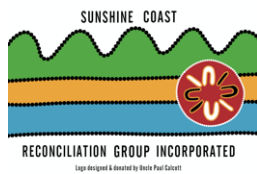
Given the challenges we all face as communities in Queensland, what we need are leaders who are prepared to find solutions, to promote co-operation and truth telling and to devote their energy to building communities and not causing further harm.

We know in our hearts that these views do not represent the hearts and minds of the people of goodwill who are committed to healing our national divide and standing in strength with our First Nations peoples – now is the time for us to stand together in strength, understanding and unity.

Media contact:

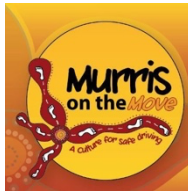
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Supporting Organisations



First Nations Women's
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