



Speech By
Jon Krause

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

South Sea Islanders, Sesquicentenary

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Beaudesert—LNP) (3.21 pm): This year marks the 150th anniversary of the landing of the first South Sea islanders in Queensland. On 15 August 1863, 150 years ago, the first group of 67 arrived on the *Don Juan* to work on a cotton plantation at Townsvale, near Beaudesert, in areas which later evolved into the areas of Veresdale and Woodhill, areas split by the Mount Lindesay Highway heading towards Beaudesert.

Cotton was in strong demand at the time, owing to shortages arising due to the American Civil War, and landowner Robert Towns' plantation was worked hard by the South Sea islanders for many years. Those who arrived 150 years ago this week were not the last. It was reported in the *Brisbane Courier* on 5 October 1866—

... during the past week, Captain Towns received another large addition of South Sea Islanders. They were brought up the river by Mr Pettigrew's new steamer—

that is, the Logan River.

Over the next 40 years or so, an estimated 62,000 South Sea islanders arrived in Australia, doing work that was physically demanding for long hours. It was not the Australia we have today that they worked in. It was a pioneer country—there would have been a lot of hard work and they would have had to endure very hard living conditions for very little pay and in very poor conditions. As the Premier noted in his statement to the parliament on Tuesday, South Sea islanders contributed to the growth and prosperity of Queensland. It is true as well that they contributed to the early development of areas around Beaudesert, and the industry they worked in attracted other settlers and other economic development. The Premier noted also that, while some South Sea islanders came willingly, many did not—there being trickery and kidnapping involved in bringing to Queensland people to work in our industries.

This weekend Minister Glen Elmes will join a commemorative ceremony at Gleneagle, near Beaudesert, commencing with a commemorative walk by members of the South Sea islander community, including Chief Richard Fandanumata, together with members of the Walker family, who are descendants of the original landowners, and they will be welcomed on to the property of Townsvale by elders from the Mununjali people. One hundred and fifty years on, Australian South Sea islanders will be welcomed on to Townsvale and as a community we will stop to remember.

The Scenic Rim Regional Council is also holding a two-month exhibition titled *Echoes: ASS/150—A shared history of Beaudesert and the arrival of South Sea Islanders*, and this will be launched tomorrow night. This exhibition has been prepared in partnership with the Beaudesert Historical Society and the Vanuatu-Australian South Sea islander community, with funding from the council and the Queensland government.

I would like to thank the many people from the Beaudesert community who have supported this initiative. No doubt wrongs occurred in the past—that happens in societies. How we deal with the past, remember it and honour those who worked hard for little or no reward, who were discriminated against and many of whom were deported, is a matter for our society today. This week Beaudesert and the surrounding communities will pay tribute to Australia's South Sea islanders.