

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE — EMPLOYMENT

### *Statement*

**HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral — Parliamentary Secretary)** [5.39 pm]: Thank you, Hon Rosie Sahanna. That was a very powerful speech coming from someone who clearly knows what is happening from the ground up in the Kimberley and has been a part of Indigenous issues, particularly with the youth, for many years. It is a great privilege to be working alongside someone who has that wealth of knowledge and does the right amount of homework when she gets up to talk about it. I think it is a real honour, and it is also an honour to get up and talk about an issue that connects very closely with what the honourable member just said.

I take what Hon Rosie Sahanna said around prison versus suicide. There is another option, and that is good employment with fair work and pay conditions. Unfortunately, we are seeing more and more tick-and-flick operations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander quotas within employment, and the issue that Hon Rosie Sahanna and I would like to raise today is once again about the signs that industry is not taking this seriously. It is not trying to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. It is not ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are looked after. The story that I have here will once again show that even the biggest employers, like Inpex, have a long way to go.

I turn my attention to the oil and gas industry and the company called Ventia. Ventia describes itself as —

... one of the largest essential infrastructure services providers in Australia and New Zealand.

Ventia was created in 2015 following the merger of Leighton Contractors Services division, Thiess Services and Visionstream. In 2020, Ventia acquired Broadspectrum to become one of the biggest multinational resource contractors in Australia. Ventia claims that it is proud of Indigenous participation, or so it says. This mob has reams and reams of pages of statements claiming a connection with Indigenous people, but I can tell members now that its words are cheap. In one of its statements, Ventia states —

We believe we can make a meaningful contribution to Indigenous communities by creating long-term and sustainable employment, education and business opportunities.

That to me sounds like a forked tongue. Ventia has a contract to provide offshore maintenance services to Inpex on one of the world's largest oil and gas facilities in our backyard off the coast of Western Australia, as the onshore oil and gas facility is in Darwin. Ventia's involvement in Inpex's offshore operations on the floating production storage and offloading and the central processing facilities is the main focus of its work. Inpex says that it supports the engagement of Indigenous workers and reconciliation action plans. Part of this commitment is ensuring that the contractors it engages are not simply given the tick-and-flick lip-service that we are used to, and that Indigenous engagement and employment is real and supported. Inpex have a contract with Ventia that no less than 6.5 per cent of its workforce be people of ATSI descent. How many ATSI workers do members think were actually employed on the Inpex floating production storage and offloading installation on the central processing facility? According to the contract with Inpex, there should be a minimum of three Indigenous workers working offshore. There is not one ATSI employee, not anymore—not one. There was one three weeks ago until Ventia decided to breach every one of its own employment standards and terminate the worker's employment without a thank you, let alone a reason for why he had been terminated. To maintain the confidentiality of the ATSI worker employed by Ventia on the Inpex offshore facility, we will call him John. I am going to read a letter that was sent to Hon Rosie Sahanna and me that was a communication between the Offshore Alliance and Ventia. According to my notes, the letter says —

“The Offshore Alliance represents Trace JV employees engaged on the INPEX CPF. I was contacted on Monday 7th February by John regarding his recent experience working for Trace JV on this facility.

By way of background, John is a of Torres Strait Island descent and has extensive experience working in the offshore and onshore hydrocarbon industry as a Mechanical Technician/Fitter.

John first commenced employment with Ventia–Trace JV in December 2021. He worked 2 full swings and was advised on numerous occasions that there was ongoing work.

John received commendation for his work from INPEX personnel and performed work to a high standard.

At no stage did any Trace JV Supervisor or client representative advise John that his attitude or his work performance were not satisfactory.

To the contrary. INPEX were complimentary of the work performed by the Trace JV team which John was part of. His last duty day on the facility was Thursday 27th January.

John was next scheduled to mobilise to the CPF on 16th February. On Monday 31 January, John received an email from Offshore Mobilisation Co-ordinator Sophie Cook, with advice that his services were no longer required.

John sent a response to Sophie advising that he had spoken to Trace JV Offshore Manager Yasser El-Fahham the previous week about his Torres Strait Islander background and his ongoing employment with Trace JV (John had been slotted in on the new roster for ongoing work).

He assumed when he went home for his leave that was returning —

Yasser confirmed the arrangement and wished John all the best with his time on the platform.

Sophie Cook failed to respond to John's email of 31 January. John then rang Sophie on 3rd February, and she advised that Yasser and Trace JV Lead Cost/Project Control Manager Yannick Vallet, would contact him as soon as possible.

Later that afternoon, Yannick contacted John where they discussed his situation. John questioned Yannick why he was 'let go' and was advised that he had 'no issues' with him.

During the discussion, John reminded Yannick about the conversation he had previously had with Yasser El-Fahham about Trace JV supporting First Nation personnel. John advised that he was unhappy about the subsequent events and how he was being treated by Trace JV. Yannick responded "whatever, this is just the way it is".

Unbelievable, honestly —

Yannick Vallet's comments are unacceptable and demonstrate a complete lack of regard for the importance of companies engaging and supporting First National personnel in the offshore hydrocarbon industry. It isn't acceptable to John and it certainly acceptable to the Offshore Alliance".

It is certainly not acceptable to me. I think this is outrageous. What came next from Ventia reflects how several oil and gas companies simply pay lip service to ATSI employment, which is a disgrace. Ventia engaged a human resource manager called Sirena Collins to investigate the complaints made by the union. In her investigation she spoke to three of John's managers but did not want contact John to discuss the issue. She spoke to three managers, but did not contact the ATSI member who had been laid off. She then finalised her investigation. She could not even be bothered to speak to the ATSI worker who had made the complaint about how Ventia had treated him and how he felt like he had been individualised. That is what it sounds like. The actions of Sirena Collins are nothing short of disgraceful, honestly. Ventia stands condemned for its lack of employment of ATSI workers. It is not meeting the quota it said to Inpex it would meet.

I am now standing here alongside my colleague Hon Rosie Sahanna and we are calling on Inpex: open your eyes. Have a real look at what you are signing on to with these contractors. Inpex goes around the Kimberley, talking about reconciliation plans and how it wants to see positive employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers; well, now is its opportunity to make good on that. John's situation, I am sure, is one of many that is taking place in its operations, and I think it is about time it took a closer look. It seriously needs to have a look at the situation that has gone on with John. Ventia is Inpex's contractor; Inpex is the client. Inpex has its own policies and procedures, and it has set a 6.5 per cent ATSI employment target for its contractor, but the contractor is not meeting that obligation. Where is Inpex's obligation to enforce that?

On behalf of Hon Rosie Sahanna, I implore Inpex: do the right thing. Let us get this skilled young man back out on the tools, where he belongs.