




Speech by

Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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CAPE YORK, NATIONAL PARKS

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (11.41 am): A can-do LNP government will protect Cape York's iconic natural areas and waterways, but we will do it with locals, not against them. An LNP government will ensure iconic natural areas and areas of high conservation value are properly protected, but will do so in balance with appropriate economic development. The LNP believes Indigenous communities, pastoralists and other local stakeholders should be the ones to determine that balance, not a Labor government centred in George Street supported by Brisbane based green groups. The duplicity of this Labor government is that, while it stifles the voices of Indigenous people on the cape under the guise of environmental outcomes, it fails its own environmental legislative benchmark. Cape York national parks continue to go without management plans and are part of the nearly 70 per cent of Queensland's protected areas that are not actually protected. It just goes to show that wild rivers declarations on the cape, with little genuine consultation, were more about dodgy green preference deals than about genuine environmental outcomes. This is hurting the aspirations of local Indigenous communities and makes the task of breaking out of the welfare spiral even harder because of its one-size-fits-all application.

The LNP will replace Labor's controversial wild rivers declarations on Cape York in order to give locals greater control of their economic future. The LNP trusts locals to get the balance right. After all, the LNP acknowledges the Indigenous stewardship of the rivers of Cape York, a stewardship that has existed since time immemorial. To assist local Indigenous communities, pastoralists and other cape stakeholders in continuing this stewardship, and to address Labor's appalling environmental management of the same, a can-do LNP government will develop a Cape York bioregion management plan in consultation with locals. A bioregion management plan will allow a broader approach to the management of Queensland's iconic natural areas. It will provide a regional focus on conservation activities, weed and pest management, fire management and the deployment of infrastructure and maintenance. It will encompass broader natural resource management targets, currently developed by organisations like Cape York NRM, to deliver a coordinated approach across the cape. To support the development and implementation of the bioregion management plan and in acknowledgement of the LNP's commitment to the joint management of national parks with traditional owners, a can-do LNP government will employ 30 additional Indigenous rangers in its first term. The Indigenous rangers assigned to the cape will have a particular focus on protecting its pristine waterways, protected species like dugongs and turtles, and national park management.

What has been the reaction to the LNP's policy for Cape York? Cape York Land Council Chairman Ritchie Ah Mat said—

I think it's a great day for all partners in Cape York; we absolutely welcome the announcement by Mr Newman and his colleagues about Cape York ... If black fellas in the Cape York and the Torres Strait don't get this message from the LNP and vote for the LNP, I think it will be a sad day.

Indigenous leader Noel Pearson responded in this way—

We believe that there is a way forward for conservation, development and Aboriginal land rights. We believe that a balanced approach to Cape York can work. It's worked in the past, it can work in the future. I want to see white fellas, black fellas, green fellas

all working for a balanced future and at the moment what we've had under the Wilderness Society and the Labor government is the green fellas putting their foot on our throats. We'll get better and more conservation outcomes when we cooperate, when people trust the government, because at the moment we live in fear of the Government.

Cape York Sustainable Futures CEO Trish Butler said—

It is heartening to see that the decision making will go back to the whole region and not just a few people across Cape York under an LNP government. For too long Cape York has been divided by groups from outside our region making decisions on our behalf without proper consultation.

The Anglican Church's the Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt said—

There's no question about the value of an undiminished environment for the benefit of future generations. It would be a travesty for environmental safeguards over the wild rivers areas to be removed altogether, and it's good to see that the proposed plans include an appropriate level of protection. Sustainable development includes both the well-being of communities and the protection of the environment.

Bligh Labor and the 'green fellas' will use terms like 'open season for mining on the Cape', but quite frankly it is ridiculous to suggest the LNP plan would allow unlimited damming or mining of the cape's pristine waterways. Any mining or significant development must still pass through a stringent EIS process. It would be assessed against myriad state and Federal legislation, including the EPBC act. It should also be understood that mining is already occurring on the cape under current Labor government legislation. Do not listen to what Labor says; look at what it does.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that this announcement is about the future of Cape York. The LNP does not currently have plans to repeal or replace any of the other wild rivers declarations. In contrast to Labor's approach, we will consult with local stakeholders. We know Labor's one-size-fits-all approach is failing the environment and local communities alike. We will discuss the future of each region with locals in those regions. We will work with locals, not against them.