



Speech by


## Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Tuesday, 29 May 2012

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### MOTION: MUNGKAN KANDJU NATIONAL PARK

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (5.56 pm): It gives me great pleasure to participate in this debate about last week's historic land transfer—a land transfer of more than 450,000 hectares of land in Mungkan Kandju National Park in the Archer Bend area to Aboriginal ownership. Can I pause and note for the record the honour bestowed on me by the Wik-Mungkan, Southern Kaanju and Ayapathu people in inviting me to be part of last week's celebrations. Our government's acceptance of the invitation demonstrated our commitment to ensuring that Indigenous communities have a bigger say in decision making about economic development and the management of their lands.

I take this opportunity to once again place on record this government's pledge to protect the cape's iconic natural areas and waterways in partnership with local communities. This government is working with local people on the cape, not against them, to protect iconic areas and to find a balance to allow appropriate economic development. Compare this to the failings and the duplicity of the previous Labor government, which was so hungry for Greens preferences that it stifled the voices of Aboriginal people on the cape under the guise of so-called environmental outcomes.

This government will replace the wild rivers declarations on the cape with a bioregion management plan that sets out a vision for ensuring the natural values of the cape are properly protected yet balanced with sustainable economic development. The one-size-fits-all wild rivers declarations are hurting the aspirations of the cape's Indigenous communities. That is why, within our first 100 days, we have started the process of real, meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities, Cape York organisations and other local stakeholders.

We will not impose an outcome on the cape like the former Labor government did. We will not dictate from Brisbane to communities more than 2,000 kilometres away on the cape. The main difference between this energised, can-do government and the previous tired Labor government is that we will not be seeking Greens preferences at the expense of good public policy. Instead, the community, who know and love the land and whose ancestors have cared for the land since the dawn of time, will help shape its future. We are seeking their views about how together we can address complex issues such as sustainable economic development, natural resource management and the protection of rivers and other areas of cultural and environmental significance. Through this plan, the wild rivers declarations will be revoked and a range of initiatives, such as possible World Heritage nomination, more Indigenous rangers and country based planning, will continue to be explored.

The Cape York bioregion management plan gives us a wonderful opportunity to bring together the environmental, cultural and economic aspirations of cape communities while at the same time streamline processes and reduce red tape. I believe that together we have a unique opportunity to articulate a strategic vision for the region and find the best way to turn this vision into a reality. I will ensure the plan produces tangible outcomes that benefit not only Cape York Peninsula and its communities but also Queensland as a whole. While the bioregion management plan is being progressed, this government will continue to deliver tenure resolution and joint management of national parks on Cape York Peninsula. The

government is looking forward to working in partnership with Aboriginal traditional owners to jointly manage Oyala Thumotang National Park, Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land and other national parks on the cape.

The transfer of Mungkan Kandju National Park and Archer Bend has been a major step forward in the resolution of tenure on Cape York Peninsula. It has significantly increased the area of land that has been returned to Aboriginal ownership under the program to nearly two million hectares. Of that area, more than 1.2 million hectares are now protected through jointly managed national parks. This government is also assisting Aboriginal land trusts to manage and protect natural and cultural values on their lands outside parks, including in nature refuges. We will continue to do this by providing financial assistance as well over the next three years for land management at Archer Bend, both within and outside Yuukingga Nature Refuge. This government recognises the aspirations of local communities and will work with them to deliver sustainable land use. We will work in partnership with the people of Cape York Peninsula to deliver a bioregion management plan, tenure resolution, joint management of national parks and improve the economic and environmental outcomes for the region. In summary, I am proud that this government has already in its first 100 days made great progress in returning land to traditional owners while conserving the unique values of the cape for future generations of Queenslanders.