




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Skilling Queenslanders for Work

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (2.15 pm): Visiting Queensland's rural and remote Indigenous communities is something I am very passionate about. In the final week of August I visited the Woorabinda community in central Queensland to announce a groundbreaking deal between Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council and three leading resources companies. The multimillion dollar deal will see Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council manage more than 500 hectares of threatened Brigalow Belt land as biodiversity offsets. Council will carry out this important environmental initiative on behalf of Cockatoo Coal, BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance and BHP BillitonMitsui.

This deal is a win for everyone involved, delivering on environmental protection, supporting long-term job opportunities for locals, and providing for the development of this great Indigenous community. The ancient custodians of this land now have an opportunity to undertake meaningful work protecting our unique environments and strengthening their connection to country. In particular, the project will provide for the protection of the vulnerable ornamental snake, the vulnerable squatter pigeon, the vulnerable long-eared bat and the endangered solanum species of plant. With over 500 hectares being protected under the agreements, these partnerships mark a significant achievement for environmental conservation in Queensland. It is the first of what I hope will be many similar agreements enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to provide environmental management services to companies throughout Australia.

On the weekend the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships' new cultural heritage online portal won a prestigious ICT award at the Spatial Excellence Awards. The portal assembles information and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage in a central and accessible location. It is a vital tool in preserving Queensland's proud Indigenous cultural heritage. It is also an important research and planning tool which assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and others to assess the cultural heritage values of particular Indigenous areas. The benefits of the new portal are enormous for land users, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties and for future generations of Queenslanders. I congratulate DATSIP for developing this important new resource and for winning this prestigious award.