




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aurukun

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Sport) (9.43 am): As the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, I want to assure the residents of Aurukun that this government will work with them during the tough times to identify positive solutions. It is an understatement to say that the Palaszczuk government is very concerned about the recent events in Aurukun, including the risks to the safety of our hardworking teachers, our service providers and the wider community. Our commitment to ensuring teachers' safety was evidenced by the Minister for Education's decision to temporarily close the Aurukun campus of the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy for a period of five school days and to review the situation prior to reopening the school.

Having been to Aurukun on many occasions, I know the majority of people want to live harmoniously without all of the violence. However, there appears to be a group of people—some of them young—for whom property damage and destruction and threatening or violent behaviour are a part of their lives. This is clearly not acceptable and requires a response from government. The active policing in the community will continue for as long as necessary, but we should not lose sight of the fact that we have to look at the root causes of dysfunction in the community, and that must be our focus.

Directors-general from key government agencies will be working with the Aurukun shire mayor, Derek Walpo, and other members of the community. As a government we will need to apply our individual and collective efforts to immediately improve safety and living arrangements for service providers and the community generally, as well as working with the community to develop a way forward to achieve sustainable calm.

It is important to make sure that a whole-of-government focus is meaningful and sustained in Aurukun. That includes taking every opportunity to have people engaged and busy in the community. Over the next month I have asked that the government receives advice from key agencies and the community on the following: how best to re-engage children and young people disengaged with school or employment; ways to achieve sustainable calm; building community safety and security in the longer term; strengthening community governance; improving school attendance and engagement of young people; harnessing opportunities for business development and employment.

As an immediate response, we have increased the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships' presence on the ground to improve coordination. The department is also working with the Queensland Police Service and the PCYC in providing logistical and other support, and providing activities and supervision for students while the school is closed. I can also advise members of the House that the existing CCTV network in Aurukun has been useful in identifying some of the

alleged offenders and installation of the wider CCTV network has commenced. In addition, an urgent review of all safety and living arrangements for service providers has also commenced in the community, and work has started on increased security measures.

Let me be clear: the Queensland government wants to continue work in partnership with the Aurukun community, the council, police, teachers and other workers. I will be in Aurukun tomorrow, joining the member for Cook, the mayor and others in the community at the community meeting which has been called to discuss a plan for a way forward in Aurukun. This government will intensify its efforts, in partnership with the people of Aurukun, to ensure a safer and more secure future can be achieved and to make sure that the community will be as resilient as possible.