



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**


**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

### **Cape York, Traditional Owners**

 **Hon. M FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (2.50 pm): Last Wednesday in Cairns it was difficult to not be overrun by emotion when three Cape York clans—the Wuthathi, Kuuku Ya'u and Northern Kaanju people—took back control of their ancestors' land. The physical act of putting pen to paper on behalf of the Palaszczuk government to hand back almost 1,600 square kilometres of land to Cape York's traditional owners was a moment in history 31 years in the making. It is a significant step in our state's reconciliation journey.

This is no ordinary tract of land. Located about 800 kilometres by road north of Cairns, the isolated area known as Bromley is enormous—larger than the entire Brisbane local government area. Bromley is rich in cultural and environmental heritage. It is where in 1986 the Bjelke-Petersen government wanted to build what would have been the world's first commercial spaceport. It planned to trash the area by launching Russian rockets from pristine Temple Bay. There was no appreciation of the area's unique environment or the traditional custodians of the land. The Bjelke-Petersen government did not ask the traditional owners; it just took the land. Thirty-one years on, Bromley stands as an example of the extraordinary overreach that characterised so much of the Bjelke-Petersen government.

The Bjelke-Petersen government's lack of consultation is in stark contrast to the actions of the Palaszczuk government. The handback sees the birth of two new national parks, sprawling over more than 51,000 hectares, jointly managed by the traditional owners and the Queensland government. Some 113,000 hectares has been designated as Aboriginal freehold land to provide economic opportunity and Indigenous jobs through innovations such as ecotourism. It also means that culturally and environmentally sensitive areas are protected for future generations.

Bromley is part of a wider Palaszczuk government program that has returned almost 3.7 million hectares of land to traditional owners on the cape. The Palaszczuk government understands the importance of land ownership for economic development. What the Bjelke-Petersen government did was wrong. I am honoured to be part of a government that has returned this land to its rightful owners. This is the good thing governments do. Good governments deliver to the rightful owners of the land.