




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Protected Areas and Aboriginal Land, Acquisition

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (10.01 am): It is an incredible privilege to rise to update the House on the Palaszczuk government's latest addition to our protected area estate. As the Premier has just announced, the government has recently acquired Bramwell Station and Richardson Station in Cape York. These two properties are the gateway to northern Cape York and the northernmost point of Australia: Pajinka, also own as the Tip. Mr Speaker, as you acknowledge at the beginning of every day in this place, we are all fortunate to live in a country that is home to two of the oldest continuing cultures, but we have an ugly and uncomfortable shared history in this country and it is something we need to tell the truth about. As a government, we have a responsibility to do all we can to restore some of the wrongs of the past. One of the most important ways we can do that is through land justice.

This morning I spoke to Gerhardt Pearson, whom I want to acknowledge will be here today along with Richie Ah Mat. Gerhardt was at the first meeting of traditional owners who met in Cape York in 1989 to talk about what would eventually become the program of hand backs that was commenced by the Goss government. We talked about the painful history of people being forcibly removed from their land around the tip of Cape York. Back then they did not believe they would get back walking, living or breathing on country. They never thought their grandparents' footprints would return. The traditional owners of this land have waited—they have waited for more than 30 years, and for generations before that—to have their land back.

The Goss government embarked on a program of land hand backs and it is something that we are proud to continue. The Beattie government enacted groundbreaking legislation to bring about formal ownership and joint management of Cape York Peninsula national parks, and it has been an important partnership forged between successive Labor governments and First Nations people over many years. The next step is for the Queensland government and traditional owners to work together to determine the most appropriate allocation of land for national parks, Aboriginal land and cultural heritage management.

This acquisition forms part of the Palaszczuk government's Protected Area Strategy, with more than 14 million hectares across Queensland now protected in some way. We have also recently acquired The Lakes, a 35,000-hectare property north of Hughenden, which we announced last month. These purchases were highly strategic and carefully negotiated. For the purchase of these three properties we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to The Nature Conservancy Australia, which brokered contributions from charitable foundations, including the Wyss Foundation.

Also part of this strategy is the \$24 million we announced for the appointment of 54 First Nations rangers for 13 communities across Queensland, with more positions to come. I want to acknowledge the former environment minister, the Hon. Leanne Enoch, for announcing those rangers. With their knowledge and connection to land and sea, these Indigenous rangers play a vital role in their

communities and in looking after national parks and protected areas. We are grateful for the knowledge they share. I know this is a significant announcement and that many people have been working on it for many, many years. I want to acknowledge those people and the next generations, who will now be able to leave their footprints on this land.