

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 589

asked on Wednesday, 18 April 2007

MR HOOLIHAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER AND MINISTER ASSISTING THE PREMIER IN NORTH QUEENSLAND (MR WALLACE)—

QUESTION:

What are the possible benefits for Indigenous people on the return to Aboriginal Land Trusts of land under the Aboriginal Land Act?

ANSWER:

The *Aboriginal Land Act 1991* (the Act) seeks to address past dispossession of lands and foster Aboriginal peoples' capacity for self development and self reliance.

The Act is a key instrument in enabling Aboriginal people to obtain ownership of land and the benefits to them are increased wellbeing and cultural affirmation. It gives Aboriginal people greater involvement in, and influence on, planning and the management of land and sea country. Where appropriate, it can provide the opportunity for Aboriginal people to utilise the land as a resource for economic development.

I am pleased to say that in recent months I have officiated at two significant handover ceremonies in the Rockhampton region, and witnessed first hand the significance of these handovers for Aboriginal people.

On 20 January 2007, I handed back 137 hectares of land at Mt Wheeler to the Darumbal people, and the emotion expressed by them on that day demonstrated how much spiritual significance the land held for them and how holding and being responsible for the land will provide a platform for cultural affirmation for generations to come.

On 4 April 2007, I handed back 172 hectares of land on Great Keppel Island to the Woppaburra people. The handover was a great and very emotional day for the Woppaburra people. They have nurtured and protected Great Keppel Island for over 5,000 years and they will now be able to protect it into the future.

The Great Keppel land transfer is the 57th, involving a total of 1.34 million hectares of land, to take place since the Act came into effect in 1991.

I strongly support the benefits that this legislation brings to indigenous people and I am looking forward to officiating at future handovers as they arise.