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## MEDIA RELEASE

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**For immediate release**

### **'Can do' attitude on lease to benefit indigenous youth**

A North Queensland grazier's long-running bid to develop a rural training school on his property has today received a boost from the Newman LNP Government.

Minister for Natural Resources and Mines and Hinchinbrook MP Andrew Cripps has announced his Department would support an application by well-known horseman and rural educator Geoff Toomby for a term lease over part of his property, Wonderland Station, 40 kilometers west of Townsville.

"Mr Toomby has battled for many years with the former State Government to have his lease conditions changed to allow him to formally establish a training facility for young people to prepare them for a career in the cattle industry," Mr Cripps said.

"Since becoming Minister, I have worked with my Department to find a way through the obstacles put up by the former government to help make Mr Toomby's plans a reality, and at the same time improve the employment prospects for young locals, especially indigenous youth."

Mr Cripps said he was very pleased with today's announcement, not only as the responsible Minister, but also as Mr Toomby's local MP.

"The Newman LNP Government is committed to a fresh approach to land tenure issues across Queensland," he said.

"This government has already signalled it is prepared to be far more practical and flexible when considering sensible applications from leaseholders for more secure tenure, particularly rural landholders.

"The LNP is not in the business of doing any special favours, but where a solution can be found within the law, I expect my departmental officers to work hard to find that solution and support Queenslanders who want to get in and have a go."

Mr Toomby welcomed the government's support and thanked Mr Cripps for his commitment.

"Over the years, and totally off our own bat, we've encouraged and trained 28 indigenous teenagers and placed them straight into jobs on northern Australian cattle stations," Mr Toomby said.

The Toomby's horsemanship and station hand courses are recognised Australia-wide by organisations such as the Charles Darwin University, the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association, the Consolidated Pastoral Company and Australian Country Choice.

"My wife Vicki and I have only ever wanted to start small with just a few students at a time, but the

former State government wasn't interested in supporting us. In fact, at times, they seemed to want to make it pretty hard for us, so we're very pleased after all these years and with Andrew's help, to see a change in approach from the new government."

Mr Toomby's application, which is the first step in the process to obtain a 30-year lease, will also involve consideration of the requirements of the Townsville City Council, as trustees of the land to which the application relates.

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