



## **Media Release**

### **Tuesday, 24 April 2007**

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#### **Government funding helps bring "world first" to Coffs Coast.**

The Federal Member for Cowper, Mr. Luke Hartsuyker MP, today announced that the Australian government would support Coffs Harbour Challenge's EcoCover project through its Sustainable Regions funding programme.

Coffs Harbour Challenge is a community based organisation that provides employment and skill development programmes that enhance the ability of people with a disability to fully participate in their community.

Coffs Harbour Challenge has been working to establish a plant to manufacture EcoCover, a patented mulch mat made from recycled paper.

General Manager of Coffs Harbour Challenge, Mr. Ian Wade, said that the significant funding contribution being made through the Sustainable Regions programme will enable the purchase and installation of the manufacturing plant to be finalised.

"We hope to be producing EcoCover mulch matting in Coffs Harbour before the end of this year" he said.

Mr. Wade said that the product was fully biodegradable and provided an environmentally acceptable alternative to plastic or herbicides in the control of weeds. The product also has excellent moisture retention properties that will help with water management during the current drought period.

"University research has shown that EcoCover is a unique product. It is a world first," Mr. Wade said.

The Coffs Harbour manufacturing plant will be the first of its kind in Australia, and could well be the first production plant outside of New Zealand.

The process will use paper from Coffs Harbour Challenge's secure document destruction service as well as other sources.

"As well as the project's environmental benefits in making a product using material removed from the waste stream and providing a viable alternative to plastic, this project will deliver a number of jobs for people with a disability, and provide an income stream that will support Coffs Harbour Challenge's programmes for full community participation" Mr Wade said.

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