



Speech by

STUART COPELAND

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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CROC FESTIVAL

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (6.53 p.m.): It is my great pleasure to report that last week the member for Gregory and shadow Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Vaughan Johnson, and I represented the opposition at the 2001 Croc Festival held on Thursday Island. The Croc Festival is the indigenous version of the Rock Eisteddfod, which I am sure many members present are aware of and, I hope, are actively supporting.

The Croc Fest was begun in Weipa in 1998 largely due to the support of then Health Minister and now Leader of the Opposition Mike Horan. It has grown significantly over those years both in Queensland and nationwide and this year will be held in five locations—Kununurra, Tom Price, Port Augusta, Moree and Thursday Island. The festival on Thursday Island involved approximately 1,000 students from schools right across the Torres Strait, the northern peninsula area, other Queensland regions and one school from Papua New Guinea.

A recent independent study of the impact of the Croc Fest undertaken by four researchers at the University of South Australia reported that the Croc Festival promotes a sense of togetherness within individual communities as well as between different communities. There is also evidence that the festivals have also led directly to increased school attendance from participating students, raised self-esteem and increased awareness of healthy lifestyle messages. Of course, 100% In Control was a key message of all activities during the festival: that you can have fun totally alcohol and drug free.

There were numerous activities associated with the Croc Festival. The major highlight was the public performances by the schools. There was a huge range of performances, including traditional and modern dance and song, with many different interpretations and messages. There were many workshops throughout the day for students to participate in. I was extremely impressed with the enthusiasm of both the facilitators and workshop participants and I was able to get to nearly all of the workshops held on the island. Workshops included the 100% In Control health expo, a huge careers market, sports including AFL, netball, outrigger, hockey, basketball, kanga cricket, contemporary dance, traditional dance and music, environmental awareness and goal setting.

I particularly wish to mention the goal setting workshop, because it was one that I spent quite a bit of time at. It was run by Danny Morseau, former Olympic basketballer, music legend Jimmy Little, Gavin Jones, editor and publisher of an indigenous magazine, and Dr Ngiare Brown. All of them are indigenous Australians who are extremely high achievers in their own fields. Their message was simple and clear: you can make something of your life if you set goals, work hard and stay drug and alcohol free—a valuable message for everyone.

I would like to pay tribute to Peter Sjoquist and his dedicated and talented team for the work that they do both with the Croc Festival and the Rock Eisteddfod. They are making a very valuable and, perhaps more importantly, a very tangible difference to the lives of both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. Tribute must also go to the students and schools who took part and, more importantly, the people of Thursday Island who so warmly welcomed us to their community.
