



Speech by

# STUART COPELAND

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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Hansard 4 December 2001

## YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

**Mr COPELAND** (Cunningham—NPA) (7.07 p.m.): All too often we hear negative stories about what young people are doing in our community and we do not hear enough of the good news that is going on out there—and there are a lot of good news stories about young people. On Friday night, I was able to attend a showcase of the actions of young people in the Queensland finals of the Young Australian of the Year Awards held in Brisbane. It was absolutely amazing to see the finalists who had made the awards night on Friday night—what they have achieved, where they have done it and their vision and possibilities for the future.

The Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, was unable to be there on the night, so he asked me to present the federal government's Regional Initiative Award on his behalf, which I was extremely pleased to do. The three finalists in that award were absolutely outstanding young people: Leanne Saunders of Kingaroy, who has supported many land-holders and communities of the South Burnett region to achieve sustainable land, water and vegetation management on their own properties; Danial Rochford, from Julia Creek, who represents the views of young people and young farmers on a whole range of federal government committees and advisory councils and is currently the National President of Australian Rural Youth; and Matthew Eckford, who went on to win that award, also of Julia Creek. A desire to bring about a smarter and more cost-effective way of doing business in the regional environment inspired Matthew to establish and fund [www.ruralindustryconnect.com](http://www.ruralindustryconnect.com). The web-based communication initiative fosters best practices in rural and regional businesses and aims to reduce isolation in rural and regional life. Matthew sold over 150 head of his own cattle to provide initial seed capital funding for the project. With almost 50,000 current members in Queensland, he hopes to soon extend the service to other states and territories. Those three young people are indicative of the good work that is going on across this state and, as I said, only provide a snapshot of the very good news stories out there.

A number of other categories were also decided on the night. The Community Service Award was won by Elizabeth Pohlmann, who works with youth in the Townsville and Thuringowa communities. The Youth Affairs Career Achievement Award was won by Scott Hocknull, who has successfully managed to pursue a career in palaeontology. Scott also won the Science and Technology Award, so he had a good night. The Sports Award was won by Deborah Lovely. The Environment Award was won by Samantha Morris. The Arts Award was won by Daniel Webb from Cairns. He is only 15 and performed a number of items on the night and has a huge career in front of him. After winning two segment awards, Scott Hocknull went on to win the State Young Australian of the Year. He will now go on to the final, as will all of the sectional winners. After winning two individual sections, Scott is obviously an outstanding young man. He is the youngest curator of a museum and is the curator at the Queensland Museum in the palaeontology section.

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