



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

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TOWNSVILLE; RUGBY WORLD CUP

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): Today it gives me pleasure to rise to speak of all things Townsville. Townsville is a great place to live. I know I have said that numerous times in this place, but it is a great place to live because it is friendly, it is family oriented, it has a competitive education structure, it has clean air and it has a very supportive environment. Townsvillians will trot out to any event at all, even a spitting competition. Townsville also has a health system that, despite protestations from the opposition to the contrary, is the envy of all other states. Townsville also has a love affair with sport, so members can imagine the buzz in our city at the moment with the arrival of the Rugby World Cup.

A government member interjected.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Yes, go Japan! Believe it when I say that this is a huge boost to Townsville and its economy. The hotels are booked out, motels are booked out and reef cruises are booked out. You name it and it is booked out. The ARU's Chief Executive, John O'Neill, said he was so impressed with Townsville as a venue that he would consider it for future international and Super 12 games.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Ms NELSON-CARR: He was not booked out, no. Townsville will also be considered for a team in the national competition scheduled to start in 2005. Townsville loves sport no matter what game, and Rugby is proving to be no exception. As I said, community spirit is always high in Townsville and many homes, shops, restaurants, cafes and hotels have special welcome signs in different languages on display for the many visitors who are visiting the cup. Rugby has also brought family together, with local man Gerald Southward meeting his long lost relative Scottish captain Bryan Redpath for the first time. In the late 1800s Mr Southward's great great grandfather, who was a brother of Mr Redpath's great great grandfather, sailed to Australia from Scotland.

None of these events in Townsville would have been possible without the vision and the tenacity of Richard Power. Richard was instrumental in bringing the Rugby to Townsville, as he was in bringing the Townsville Crocodiles and the North Queensland Cowboys to fruition. Without Richard, the Townsville Entertainment Centre and its extensions would not have been possible. We have enjoyed many different events at that venue, including the Davis Cup, national rodeo competitions, basketball matches, various concerts and exhibitions, not to mention the occasional sitting of parliament. Richard, who passed away last week, will be very much missed in the Townsville community. I also have to say that locals believe that the numbers that were publicised for Sunday night's games were actually underestimated. The official figures say that there were 19,170, but it is more likely to be about 23,000 to 24,000.

A government member interjected.

Ms NELSON-CARR: No, this is getting back to Townsville.

I now want to return to another magnificent Townsville feature that I mentioned before, the Townsville Hospital. Although it is much maligned by the opposition, last year there were over 400,000 occasions of service within the Townsville health service district. That is not bad, is it? It is true: not all of these occasions were positive, but most of them were. It should be well known that the dedicated and committed staff who are all locals work extremely hard to continue to improve our health service. So it was heartening to see two letters to the editor last week each congratulating the hospital. Instead of

emotive sensational hype peddled by the opposition—guaranteed to frighten people and make certain that no specialists will want to travel north to work in our facility—we had a reality check. Thank goodness for Joan Kleynhans from North Ward and Richard Clapham from Woree, both of whom reacted to the negativity and the complaints that are so frequently perpetuated by an ill-informed and biased opposition. It peddles this misinformation to the media and creates a less than healthy outcome, so thank-you to Joan and Richard who took the time to express their gratitude to the staff at the medical centre of excellence.

Why don't I tell members the truth about what happens at the Townsville health service. During the past year there were 44,904 medical imaging occasions of service; 19,763 dental occasions of service; 24,930 oncology occasions of service; 19,064 physiotherapy occasions of service; 11,618 cardiology occasions of service; and 17,601 obstetric occasions of service. The emergency departments throughout the Townsville Health Service District recorded 53,993 presentations during the last financial year. Congratulations to the Director of the Townsville Emergency Department, Dr Niall Small, and his dedicated staff who provide first-rate care and attention to all of their patients, and they do it with a smile. Did members know that there were 1,776 babies born in the Townsville health service district in the last year, with over 300 premature births, spending 6,497 nights in the Townsville Hospital's neonatal unit? Congratulations to Dr Whitehall and his team. I could go on. Townsville is a great place.