



Speech by

**Dr LESLEY CLARK**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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**CAIRNS REGIONAL GROUP TRAINING, ANNUAL AWARDS NIGHT**

**Dr LESLEY CLARK** (Barron River—ALP) (10.08 p.m.): Last Friday, 16 April, I was privileged to represent the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations at the annual awards night of Cairns Regional Group Training when the achievements of their apprentices and trainees were recognised and rewarded. The evening was particularly special because it was also the 20th anniversary of CRGT, which has been headed by outstanding CEO, John Windsor, who began his employment with the organisation 20 years ago to the day. During those 20 years the number of CRGT apprentices and trainees has steadily grown to its current level of 1,042, making it the second largest group training organisation in Queensland, thereby living up to its motto 'From little acorns giant oak trees grow'.

Some of the significant milestones in the 20-year history of CRGT include its entry into the specialised field of indigenous employment in 1990. Today, 16 per cent of CRGT apprentices and trainees are indigenous, working in companies in Cape York and the Torres Strait as well as the Cairns region.

In 1993 their retail skills centre was established in response to industry needs and is recognised as one of the most successful training centres in Australia. CRGT initially operated out of various leased premises but in 1998 Cairns TAFE college provided land on their campus at peppercorn rental and a purpose-built administration centre was constructed and later extended to accommodate training programs.

In 2002 CRGT expanded its operations and acquired funding to run the government's Get Set for Work Program and most recently offered a talent identification program to high school students in conjunction with a vocational partnership group to prepare young people for school based vocational training and work. I acknowledge work of the founders of CRGT including the early board chairmen, Chris Johnson, Chris Bollen and Frans Hamer, and the current chair, Les Maunder. The current general manager, Morrie Cunningham, was also a key member of the steering committee that established the successful regional training organisation.

The major accolades of last Friday night were reserved for CEO, John Windsor, the driving force behind CRGT who has announced his intention to retire in October of this year. Over his 20 years John has helped to transform the lives of more than 10,000 young people who have passed through the doors of CRGT. He has supported hundreds of businesses, large and small, in their training endeavours and thereby strengthening the skill base of our industries and contributed significantly to the economic development of far-north Queensland.

I have known and worked with John in various roles over most of the last 20 years and I am proud to count him as a friend. My parliamentary colleagues Warren Pitt and Desley Boyle, who were also present at the award night, join me in congratulating John and wishing him and his wonderful wife, Norma, all the very best for their future together in retirement. His legacy will live on and I am sure that CRGT will clock up another successful 20 years as the giant oak tree continues to grow from the acorn that he nurtured so well.