



Speech by

**Jason O'Brien**

**MEMBER FOR COOK**

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## **INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION IN PARLIAMENT, SCHOOL VISIT**

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (6.37 pm): It has been a great pleasure this week to have students visiting from the Coen and Hope Vale state schools, whom I think everyone has now seen. I remember that on the first day the member for Waterford sat in this parliament he had a visit from a school in his electorate. No doubt like many members in the south-east corner he now takes these visits for granted. It grated on me that he got a visit on his first day in this place and that in 3½ years I had never had a school visit—until this week.

When the Speaker called a workshop earlier this year looking for ideas on how to improve Indigenous participation in the parliament, I told him about my frustration in getting schoolkids from remote communities to parliament. With the fantastic assistance of Paul Travis from the North Queensland Cowboys, a plan was formulated and with great logistical difficulty the students have been here this week.

The students were only allowed to come if they had a good school academic and attendance record. Although the students went to the State of Origin last night and will play a key role in the inaugural reconciliation match between the mighty North Queensland Cowboys and the Bulldogs on Friday night, the trip has included a number of academic activities, including but not limited to a tailored extensive parliamentary education program, a visit to two local schools and the Museum, as well as an art project with the Ferny Grove State School.

I would like to thank the following organisations for their assistance in making this project happen: the North Queensland Cowboys; the Gold Coast Titans and their sponsor Jetstar, who assisted with airfares for the trip; the Queensland Rugby League and the National Rugby League; the Speaker's office and in particular Stephen Gay; Roylene Mills and Carol Stinson from the Parliamentary Service; and Lynette Cresswell from my electorate office.

I think regional parliaments are a wonderful way to bring this House to the people, but I think we also need other programs to ensure that students in western locations and far-northern locations find out about the important work that we do here. I hope that the Cape York to parliament program can act as a pilot for other bush kids to get to parliament and to learn about that important work.