



Speech by

Mandy Johnstone

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Hansard Wednesday, 16 September 2009

TOWNSVILLE PNG WANTOK ASSOCIATION DINNER; NORTH QUEENSLAND TOURISM AWARDS

Ms JOHNSTONE (Townsville—ALP) (9.29 pm): I am pleased to share with the House tonight two events I attended on Saturday night which highlight the diversity of culture and industry in our great city of Townsville. On this day, 16 September 1975, Papua New Guinea gained independence from Australia. On Saturday evening I attended the Townsville PNG Wantok Association dinner at the Upper Ross PCYC for the 34th independent celebration dinner and cultural night. This was a very important coming together for the Townsville PNG community. Not only did we enjoy a feast of mammoth proportions complete with traditional dishes of fish, taro and sweet potato as well as the best roast pork you could enjoy anywhere; this event was much more than just a dinner and a catch-up. It was an opportunity for the Townsville PNG Wantok members to share their joys, concerns, hopes and aspirations for the future of Papua New Guinea.

There was an in-depth presentation by Sam Talepakali, who argued for sustainable industry across a range of potential sectors, including barramundi and redclaw farming export opportunities, and some observations of mining operations in Papua New Guinea. Thank you to secretary Mava Haropula and cultural officer Margaret Baison for the invitation and hospitality on the night. We were fortunate to see performances of traditional PNG dancers and also Pacific Island dancers, including Margaret leading the traditional Hiri dance, which is reserved only for Independence Day celebrations. Not only did I enjoy meeting with families who attended on Saturday night, but it was a great opportunity for me to catch up with others who support multiculturalism in the true sense of the word. Meg Davis, manager of the Townsville Multicultural Support Group, and Angela and Thez from the Migrant Resource Centre also attended on the night.

After the Independence Day dinner I went on to celebrate the 2009 North Queensland Tourism Awards in the beautiful surrounds of James Cook University's George Kneipp Auditorium and the School of Creative Arts. Some 22 winners were announced on the tonight. Time will not permit me to go through all of them here tonight, but I will draw to the attention of the House two that stood out: Ross McLennan and Chelsea Cox from the Hidden Valley Cabins at Paluma—

Ms Nelson-Carr: Hear, hear!

Ms JOHNSTONE: It is a fantastic organisation and place to visit. Ross and Chelsea from the Hidden Valley Cabins at Paluma near Townsville won two awards—the Hosted Accommodation Award and the popular *Townsville Bulletin* People's Choice Award. Whilst a small operation, the cabins are recognised and known world-wide for their leadership in the area of sustainable tourism. They are—and I quote from their website—'an eco-friendly resort, Australia's first carbon neutral resort and tour company who operate on 100% solar power'. Anyone who has visited the Townsville region would know of Paluma and this fantastic mountain rainforest really is heaven on earth.

Our very own ReefHQ also won the major tourist attraction award on Saturday night. Regular visits to the aquarium are essential pastimes for the locals of Townsville. There is simply no better way to spend a Saturday morning with the kids. Congratulations to everyone who won an award on Saturday night. North Queensland has a lot to offer and it is great to see our tourism industry thriving and competing with the best in the world.