



Speech by


**John Hathaway**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

Hansard Wednesday, 20 June 2012

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## **NORTH QUEENSLAND COWBOYS**

 **Mr HATHAWAY** (Townsville—LNP) (11.58 pm): I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the North Queensland Cowboys' Learn Earn Legend! program. This program was introduced in Townsville in mid-2011 and targets year 11 and 12 Indigenous students. The main aim of the program is to bridge the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. It involves North Queensland schools and has been designed to provide Indigenous students with the support they need to complete their secondary education. The students learn valuable life skills to become confident, young adults ready to take on the workforce. It encourages them to remain at school and finish their education and then go on to find a job and, hopefully, to become a role model and inspiration for other Indigenous children. To be successful, it was necessary to identify what interests and motivates these kids to remain with the program. The answer was obvious, the North Queensland Cowboys. I note for the record their great win last Friday against the Brisbane Broncos.

As part of the program children become members of the club and they also get to speak and interact with their local footy heroes. The Learn Earn Legend! program is funded by the federal government—so that should please the Treasurer—and supported by the North Queensland Toyota Cowboys. There is currently no funding provided by the Queensland state government. There are 34 participating schools, some from my electorate: Townsville State High, St Margaret Mary's College, Pimlico State High and St Patrick's College. I also acknowledge the industry partners of the program: James Cook University, BHP Cannington Mine, Townsville City Council, McDonald's, TAFE Queensland and the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs. These partnerships are a most important part of the program as they provide the end game—employment—and also assist in mentoring them to success.

There were 179 children involved in the first intake, and since the program's inception, and as at 8 February this year, 59 students are in active employment and 42 are furthering their education through university studies, TAFE and other training institutions. This represents 56 per cent of the students. The success of the first program means that there are now 210 children signed up to be part of the second intake.

The program is not without its challenges, the major one being the child's self-esteem. The majority of the kids who enter the program have extremely low self-esteem. They lack confidence and many have very low literacy and numeracy levels. Recently the Learn Earn Legend! program was recognised for excellence in the Queensland Reconciliation Awards. The program was a finalist in the community organisation category and received a highly commended award from our Premier. Tonight I acknowledge and recognise the hard work and dedication of all those involved: Fiona Pelling, community relations manager at the Cowboys; the players of course, in particular JT and Matty Bowen; the students; all of the schools; and the industry partners.