




Speech by

John Hathaway

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Hansard Thursday, 12 July 2012

MAGNETIC ISLAND, GEOFFREY BAY TURTLE ART

 **Mr HATHAWAY** (Townsville—LNP) (2.44 pm): I note and acknowledge the end of NAIDOC celebrations last week, and I wish to relay to the House the occasion of a special ceremony held on Magnetic Island last month. While it was not part of the local NAIDOC events, it involved traditional owners and it was an event that I was honoured to attend. Before I continue, I feel it is appropriate to acknowledge the Wulgurukaba people, who are the traditional owners of Magnetic Island. The name Wulgurukaba means the 'canoe people' and it clearly links them to the coastal areas of North Queensland, in particular Magnetic Island.

The Wulgurukaba people have lived on Magnetic Island for thousands of years but, when European settlers arrived in Townsville, the Wulgurukaba people were forced off their land until the early 1900s. This meant that they lost access to their traditional food sources and, indeed, many of them succumbed to a new onslaught of diseases that the white fella brought with them. The paradise of Magnetic Island boasts a picturesque landscape, featuring large granite boulders, sandy beaches and coral reefs, and the island has become a popular destination for tourists locally, nationally and internationally.

On 9 June, the federal member for Herbert, Ewen Jones, the deputy mayor of Townsville, Vern Veitch, and I visited Magnetic Island as special guests of the Wulgurukaba people and the Geoffrey Bay Coastcare group to be a part of the unveiling of the new turtle art at Geoffrey Bay. Arthur Johnson, the artist, received funding from the federal government's Caring for our Country program and it was arranged by the Geoffrey Bay Coastcare group. Uncle Arthur is an extremely talented artist and is also a traditional owner of the land and an Aboriginal elder. His turtle artwork was created to raise awareness of the importance of turtle sustainability and the care of the environment in which the turtles lay their eggs, in particular the sand and coastal ecosystems. Magnetic Island is a popular breeding ground for both flatback and green turtles. Unfortunately, each year, with the usual ravages of the tropics between October and January, many turtle nests are lost or destroyed due to storm surges and king tides.

The artwork will also serve as a reminder for locals and tourists alike who live on or visit the island. It is important that all people understand the adverse effects of their actions such as driving their vehicles along the beach, lighting campfires on the sand or even simply playing on the sand dunes. All of these can have significant adverse effects on the success of the turtle nesting season. Nesting is also impacted by domestic and feral animals and marine pollution.

As part of the unveiling, I was invited to take part in an official tree-planting ceremony of native trees which are suitable for securing the foreshore from the ravages of storm impacts. What was significant about this event was that all three levels of government were present and working together for this good and common cause. As the local member, it was an honour and a pleasure to participate in the unveiling and tree-planting ceremonies alongside the traditional owners, residents of Magnetic Island and my local and federal colleagues.