




Speech by

John Hathaway

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Hansard Thursday, 2 August 2012

CHALLENGE GAMES

 **Mr HATHAWAY** (Townsville—LNP) (2.53 pm): As we follow the travails of our Aussie athletes at the London Olympics, it is appropriate that I rise today to highlight the success of some of our younger athletes at the North Queensland Challenge Games who themselves face relatively greater and lifelong challenges. Last week I was fortunate, along with the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, to attend these games in Townsville.

The purpose of the Challenge Games is to provide two days of fun, friendship and participation in a range of athletic and sporting activities for students who have a disability. Students, according to their own level of interest and ability, participate in as many or as few events as they wish. Whilst the focus of the games is fun and participation, they also allow for the identification of students from all schools—state or private—who may be interested in competing at further school, regional or state level in formal track and field events. Additionally this year, for those who wished, the games enabled official classification for future events.

The 800-plus participants travelled from all over Queensland—from as far north as Weipa, west to Mount Isa and south to Mackay. The games also gave the kids the opportunity to meet some of their heroes such as Richard Coleman, Australian Paralympian; Natalie Hodges, Australian under-25 World Cup wheelchair basketballer and a former Challenge Games participant; and Darren McKenan, wheelchair basketballer and state and Oceania record holder in athletics.

The Challenge Games have won numerous awards, including the 2009 Townsville City Council's Inclusive Communities Award and more recently Education Queensland's Northern Region's Showcase Award for Excellence in Inclusive Education. These awards are a great acknowledgement for hardworking committee members like Lynne Derry of Hermit Park State School, Robyn Hosking of Heatley State School and many others from both Queensland Education, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, and parents and carers who, for the last seven years, have worked tirelessly to make the games a must-attend event for these kids and their carers from North Queensland.

It was simply fantastic to see the grins, the smiles and often the determination on the kids' faces as they came hurtling down the track. But the mark of success of the Challenge Games was the observation of a carer parent about the games who said—

I was there in the capacity of a teachers aide for one school, and all 3 students I was looking after loved their time there, but also at another school was my son. I got to see him compete in one or two events, one of them being the rely. To see him at school carnivals come last, it was absolutely wonderful and he was trying his little heart out. Both days he had a chestful of ribbons and I may struggle tomorrow to get him to not wear them to school. Thank you, for making my son's year.