



Speech by


## Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Tuesday, 27 November 2012

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### INDIGENOUS WELLBEING CENTRE; BUNDABERG HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PROGRAM

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (12.51 am): I would like to share with the House the work of the Indigenous Wellbeing Centre and the Bundaberg healthy lifestyle program. I recently visited the centre in Bundaberg where I meet staff and was presented with the outcome focused programs delivered for the people of the Bundaberg-Burnett area. The Bundaberg healthy lifestyle coordinator has been employed by the Indigenous Wellbeing Centre since July 2007 and covers the local region of Childers, Agnes Water, Gin Gin, Mount Perry, Bundaberg, Isis, Kolan.

The position is a mainstream position and addresses an identified need due to the rising rates of chronic disease caused by overweight/obesity within the community and the need to encourage healthy lifestyle behaviour change by running group based programs—Lighten Up and Living Strong—in conjunction with other healthy lifestyle initiatives. The coordinator also builds capacity and sustainability in the community by training and encouraging other health, community and employment professionals to become facilitators and run the program with their own clients. The group component of the program runs for seven to 10 weeks and covers the following areas: pre and post health screening; nutrition, label reading and healthy cooking; physical activity; behaviour change; self-esteem; and stress and relaxation.

Since starting the program at the Indigenous Wellbeing Centre there have been 44 client programs run with 491 participants completing the program. During this time frame, the post health changes have been remarkable with overall 391 kilograms and 821 centimetres being lost by people. Whilst these weight changes are impressive, the benefit of the program has also extended beyond weight loss, with many participants reporting positive changes in behaviours, such as increased physical activity, reduced sugar and fat intake and eating more vegetables. The mental health benefits of the program are also worth noting as community members report reduced social isolation caused by illness, disability or carer duties from the opportunity to interact with others and that participation in the program has inspired them to keep going.

A significant proportion of referrals to the program come from employment agencies. Additionally, a number of other community based promotions, presentations and interactive workshops and displays have been conducted over the program's time frame. The healthy lifestyle program has also developed and implemented various healthy lifestyle based tools and resources in conjunction with schools and other organisations to assist in the education and training of community members. The emphasis the Indigenous Wellbeing Centre places on the program has been the importance of the community and ensuring the grassroots holistic needs of the community are met. I regularly engage, meet and talk with community members and the public and can attest to the passion of staff and the positive outcomes.

I take this opportunity to pass on my best wishes for the festive season. Merry Christmas to you and yours.