




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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ADJOURNMENT

Smallwood, Uncle A, Men's Group

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (1.32 am): Today I acknowledge the great work being done by a true community champion in the Thuringowa electorate, Uncle Alfred Smallwood, and his particular work with his Men's Group. It is indeed timely to acknowledge his great work in this important area of community engagement and support as we have just wrapped up NAIDOC Week, which celebrates reconciliation in Australia, with a fantastic and very well attended Riverway day out, just after the NAIDOC march up Thuringowa Drive last Friday, where I also had the pleasure of joining the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, Cameron Dick, who announced a record \$200 million to address Indigenous health, particularly initiatives for closing the gap.

It was great to present Uncle Alfred Smallwood with a certificate of appreciation for his great work, dedication and commitment to his local community and to the Men's Group itself. That great work is in its 15th year of operation and is entirely voluntary. I have been very impressed by the work and support he provides to the community by way of his Men's Group. The group is a cultural mentoring and support group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and youth who have a troubled past or have social challenges and issues in the Thuringowa area and the broader Townsville area. Uncle Alfred facilitates his Men's Group for cultural mentoring on a weekly basis and his goal is to take the men out on country to participate in culturally appropriate practices such as hunting, fishing and collecting material for artefacts to make things such as boomerangs, spears, nulla-nulla and so on.

Currently the group borrows a bus from the Salvation Army Townsville Recovery Service and the North Queensland Community Centre to transport participants to and from meetings. I must also acknowledge the great work by the Salvation Army engagement officer Christopher Congoo in this space and his support for Uncle Alfred's Men's Group. Due to these vehicles being owned and used by other organisations, there are times when the vehicles are unavailable for the Men's Group to use and, therefore, volunteers will use their own vehicles to transport participants to and from the meetings. The average monthly attendance of this group is 56 men.

The Uncle Alfred's Men's Group goal is to acquire a bus of their own, to transport the men to and from the meetings and external gatherings as their group expands in attendance. I am working with Townsville City Council and other community groups to, hopefully, see this come to fruition. I and many others in Thuringowa again acknowledge and warmly congratulate Uncle Alfred on his great work in our local community.