




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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ADJOURNMENT

Palm Island

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (12.10 am): During this week in which we are acknowledging Mabo Week I would like to inform the House that I attended Palm Island last week to attend the Local Government Association of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders conference. Over 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils throughout Queensland turned up to Palm Island. It had a big impact on the local economy, as members can imagine, and around 60 people attended. Many stayed with relatives and with relatives of relatives and there was a lot of injection back into the local economy for the people on Palm Island. It has taken five years to get that conference over to Palm Island. It was very gratefully accepted by everyone on the island.

I congratulate Alf Lacey, the mayor on Palm Island, and all his councillors. At the welcoming on the first evening the participants enjoyed a kup murri. Those members who have had a kup murri will understand how sensational that is. Most importantly, the mayor personally went around and doorknocked every member of the community and invited them to come along to the kup murri as well. This was a celebration not only of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils but also of Palm Island itself and it was gratefully accepted.

While I am on my feet, I will take the opportunity to acknowledge the principal of Bwgcolman Community School. Many members in the House have been to Palm Island and have visited the school. The principal of that school, Jeff Jones, has invested four years of his time and life into the place and he finishes tomorrow. I congratulate Jeff on the outstanding work that he has done during those four years. Next, he will be going to The Willows State School on the mainland. He is looking forward to that and he will start semester 2 over there.

When he first arrived on Palm Island, school was the thing that kids did if they did not have anything else on their agenda that day. He would turn up and quite often kids were not in school; they would be swimming or diving off the jetty instead of attending school. So he introduced a saying that became the catchcry of the school, 'two way strong'. That means that you are strong in the school as a leader and as a learner, but you are also strong in the community as an Aboriginal member of the community.

Some of Jeff's achievements at that school include an increase in student attendance by more than six per cent since 2012, enrolment is up 18 per cent, reading levels of students have shown significant long-term improvement, improvement in 13 out of the 20 domains in NAPLAN testing from the previous year, this is a great one: year 12 outcomes with five graduating year 12 students receiving their QCE at the end of last year which is the highest proportion in the school's history—a great achievement—and introducing men and women's business, which improved attendance in the junior secondary area.