




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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ADJOURNMENT

Cairns Tropical Writers Festival

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (7.15 pm): What a pleasant time of day in the chamber this is. Aside from the fracas and the barrage of interesting business, these are the nice little bits I enjoy.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr HEALY: I am sorry about that. I could not hear you, my learned friend. I was talking.

I bring to the attention of the chamber a wonderful event we had in Cairns recently, the Cairns Tropical Writers Festival. Initiated in 2008, the Tropical Writers Festival is an initiative of Tropical Writers Inc., which is a community based, not-for-profit membership group formed to support writers and publishers in our region.

As I acknowledged in my parliamentary maiden speech in March of this year, Cairns is a global city, with over 25 per cent of our population being born overseas and 18 per cent not even speaking English in their own homes. This is reflected in culturally rich events such as the Cairns Tropical Writers Festival, to name one, which gives a platform for people to express and share their stories and, more importantly, their impressive and diverse identities.

For those who are not aware, writing and publishing are one of those cornerstones of the creative industries and are also important to the regional economy. For example, employment in creative industries is growing 40 per cent faster than the Australian economy as a whole, representing over 122,000 registered businesses nationally or a total of 6.2 per cent of the workforce. That equates to around 600,000 people.

I am proud to say that the government I am a part of, the Palaszczuk government, is committed to boosting the local arts, cultural and creative industries sector in the region with initiatives such as the Regional Arts Services Network—a new, innovative approach by the government to deliver regional and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural initiatives not just in Cairns but also across the state. This new approach to regional arts service delivery was established following a commitment of \$6.5 million over four years in the 2017-18 state budget and in response to comprehensive consultation with more than 330 stakeholders. The consultation established that there is strong preference for regional self-determination through regional groups. The Regional Arts Services Network model therefore focuses on capacity building to support local regional artists' priorities and projects, networking and, just as importantly, collaboration in the regions. There is also the Queensland Writers Centre, which is funded through the Queensland Arts Showcase Program.

There is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the arts is an important part of our community, particularly in our regional areas, and Cairns is an area that emanates very strongly in that respect. It is important and it is career building. I want to finish by commending the Tropical Writers Festival on the quality of its local and national presenters and the depth and breadth of this year's program. I am confident that the government will continue to support it. It is greatly supported also by the people of Cairns.