




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**  
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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## PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

### North Queensland

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.27 pm): Having been born in Townsville and growing up in Ingham, I have a great affection for the north. I have fond memories of growing up in Ingham. My father was a barber. My uncles and aunties were canefarmers who toiled hard in the hot North Queensland climate to make a better life for themselves and their families. I was also educated in North Queensland. I went to Lourdes Convent until year 4, then Cardinal Gilroy College until year 10. During my time at Lourdes Convent I went to St Mary's at West End, Townsville, for a short time when mum went to hospital to have another sibling. We were a good Catholic family. I finished my senior education at St Teresa's agricultural college just outside of Ingham, where I first played Rugby League. I was hooked.

At St Teresa's we used to have an excursion called 'scrub leave'. On Saturdays after our jobs were done we would fill in a leave form indicating which part of the Herbert River we were going to. Normally it was the gorge. We would then collect a hessian bag from the office which had fresh steak, a tin of baked beans, a tin of spaghetti, a loaf of bread, and the necessary utensils to enable the feast to be consumed. With a couple of blankets, we were off.

A camp fire and camping on the ground did not make for a good night's sleep but it did make for heaps of fun. A small coke bottle, a small amount of fishing line, a small hook and a little raw meat and black bream were to be had, which we cooked over the open fire and happily consumed. We always had to be home by Sunday morning so we did not miss mass. Those were the carefree days enjoying the beauty that the Herbert River and its surrounds had to offer. I do not believe camping on the banks of the Herbert River these days would be advisable.

Living approximately 70 kilometres north of Townsville meant that Townsville became a big part of my life growing up. Earlier this week I went to dinner at the Capitol restaurant at Cannon Park in Kirwan with a mate of mine and his wife from the days when I worked in the Bowen Courthouse. The cab took me through West End where I spent a lot of my childhood holidays visiting my grandmother and grandfather who lived in a flat at West End. The flat is still there today.

When I used to visit, there were railway yards across the flats that were home to a number of decommissioned coal trains, which provided ample opportunity for an inquisitive young fellow to explore for hours. By the time I got back to my grandparents' flat from these adventures, it was very obvious from my appearance where I had been. I recommend that everyone should visit this great region.