




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

Nature Freedom

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (7.00 pm): There are many hardworking groups within our community performing amazing work, often with little recognition or support. I want to specifically commend the work of one such group, and that is Nature Freedom run by Mathew Townsend, a Chatsworth local. Nature Freedom aims to create inclusive and accessible nature-based activities for people living with a disability. In addition, it seeks to provide employment opportunities within the organisation for those with disabilities—a virtuous circle you could say. Many of the activities involved are water based such as canoeing and kayaking. It also offers hiking and bushwalking in some of the most spectacular areas of not only Brisbane but also South-East Queensland. This enables many people who are living with a disability an opportunity to get out and experience the great outdoors with an added measure of freedom. This has the benefit of affording people with disabilities the chance to experience firsthand nature at its best.

What is impressive about Nature Freedom is the collaborative approach it adopts in undertaking its valuable work. Nature Freedom works with industry, government, other community groups and individuals to help maximise the potential of its offerings. As such, its outdoor activities and tours are co-designed by people with disabilities along with other community groups. This collaborative approach is something we can all learn from to ensure that collective ideas are taken into consideration when formulating plans for the future.

While the success of Nature Freedom is attributed to many individuals within the organisation, it can be traced back to the determination, hard work and passion of its founder—an outstanding young man, Mr Mathew Townsend. To his credit, Mathew did not let his own disabilities of Asperger's syndrome and loss of hearing stand in the way of exploring his passions. Not only did he achieve a bachelor of environmental science from James Cook University in Townsville; he also then went on an eight-month trip through the national parks of the United States. It was there that he discovered his love of nature and exploring the outdoors. Mathew brought that passion to Nature Freedom where it satisfied a number of key initiatives. Mathew understands the difficulties faced by people living with a disability, feeling isolated and being rejected at times for jobs. Unfortunately this is an all too familiar scenario for many people, but in Mathew's case he showed the determination needed to get a project off the ground and this led to the creation of Nature Freedom.

This organisation, founded with the goal of facilitating the engagement of people with disabilities within our community, has continued to thrive under Mathew's stewardship. Along the way, many people who might otherwise not have experienced the marvels that South-East Queensland has to offer have had the chance of a lifetime. This story is both inspiring as well as humbling. Thank you on behalf of the Chatsworth community to Mathew and Nature Freedom for the important work that they do.