




Speech By
Hon. Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 11 September 2024

ADJOURNMENT

Centacare FNQ, School Savvy

 **Hon. MP HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Sport) (9.03 pm): I rise to speak about the wonderful Centacare FNQ initiative School Savvy which facilitates access to school uniforms and school supplies for children and families struggling financially. That is why you need to vote for Labor, because we look after you in the busy back-to-school period at the start of the school year.

This was first launched back in 2016 as part of Anti-Poverty Week. The appeal called for donations of preloved stationery supplies and school uniforms for a pop-up shop which was opened in early January 2017. This program was developed for the start of each new school year because it is an extremely expensive time, especially off the back of school holidays and Christmas, for families on low incomes. It is estimated that in Australia over 17 per cent of children are affected by poverty, with more than 30 per cent of adults recognised as being in poverty. This has increased obviously after a decade of the LNP in federal government. Add to this the need to purchase new school uniforms for one, two, three or more children along with textbooks, school supplies plus school fees and it creates a significant financial strain on families.

The concept of School Savvy was initially very simple: to recycle preloved uniforms and stationery supplies. However, in reality, and thanks to the generosity of the Cairns community, School Savvy has distributed not only preloved goods but thousands of dollars worth of new supplies in each year of operation. The School Savvy program this year was a game changer for Centacare FNQ and assisted a record-breaking number of students, ensuring that they returned to school with the essential supplies.

The pop-up shops in both Cairns and surrounding areas experienced an overwhelming response this year, exacerbated by the impact of Cyclone Jasper and the subsequent flooding events. These natural disasters just added to the existing financial burden being experienced by families in the Tropical North. The School Savvy program provided assistance to over 1,080 families, equipping over 2,300 children with essential school supplies, plus 227 students returned to school with new haircuts because some barbers were keen to get involved. This continues to grow and that is a reflection of the community. It is a reflection of the great work done by a large range of non-government organisations. Off the success of the FNQ program, School Savvy has spread its wings over the last couple of years, with Centacare now coming on board this year with nine pop-up shop locations, 5,100 visitors and 2,700 students. This is about assisting, helping and working for our community.