



Federal praise for schools' win in truancy battle



Palm Island has set a benchmark for schools around the rest of Australia after dramatically reducing truancy rates since 12 Student Attendance Officers have been on the job, Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion (*above right*) said during his visit to Pam Island earlier this month.

The Student Attendance Officers have been employed under a Federal Government Program since the beginning of this school year.

By the third week the average attendance rate had reached

98% at one of the schools.

During the first two weeks it was 88% and 90% – well up on average rates for 'wagging' last year.

Local residents recruited as Student Attendance Officers

have a role to check up on families when their children miss school or help to find suitable transport options to ensure kids make it to class on time.

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WARNING! Some images in this Issue may contain deceased persons that may cause distress to some people.



**12-page
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Issue!**

Local attendance officers beating truancy

...From Previous Page...

The team from Campbell Page are delivering the pilot program in close collaboration with local partner organisations, school principals, parents, carers and community.

Campbell Page CEO Xavier Crimmins said it was good to see Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion take an interest.



“It was good to see the Minister taking a personal interest in the success of this initiative and wanting to see first hand the results that are being achieved on the ground,” he said.

“School attendance rates are already significantly higher and I’d like to congratulate all



involved on a great start to the year.

“This couldn’t have been achieved without the combined investment of schools, parents and the community.”

Principals Jeff Jones (Bwngcolman Community School) and Gary Recklies (St Michael’s) described the program as a success.

Mr Scullion praised students whilst stressing the importance of a good education.

“You students here on Palm have really set the benchmark for schools around Australia and this is community driven and the workers are locals who know the challenges facing families,” he said.

Mayor Alf Lacey also praised the program and said it was similar to one many years ago on Palm Island.

“Back then elders would go around and take kids

to school and talk to families,” Cr Lacey said.

During his classroom visits Mr Scullion asked students what issues they saw which could be improved.

They nominated overcrowding, transport such as roads to be fixed, more ferries and planes to



the island, and the need for more local shops and cheaper food.

“I will be speaking with Council and the State Government about the prospects of an additional food shop as opposition ensures for lower prices,” the Minister promised.

“Local people should be encouraged to grow their own fruit and vegetables to save money.”



Mr Scullion spoke to some of the Student Attendance Officers about their important roles, including 25-year-old Kylie Doomadgee.

“The Minister was down to earth,” she said.

Another officer, Simmeon Oui said he felt privileged to play a part in ensuring kids attend school.

Travel relief for renal patients

Local dialysis will be available for more renal patients on Palm Island as facilities at the Joyce Palmer Health Service are about to be expanded to include a new chair.

That's good news for those who currently have to travel to Townsville for treatment.

Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council Mayor Alf Lacey and Townsville Hospital and Health Service chief executive Julia Squire both welcomed the news.

"This new initiative is evidence of the Palm Island Health Action Plan at work and allows our people to stay on the Island bringing a lot of relief to families," Mayor Lacey said.

"It's a great partnership between the Shire and the Townsville Hospital and Health Service."

Townsville Hospital & Health Service (THHS) Board chair John Bearne said the health service had listened to the community and delivered a needed service.

Townsville THHS chief executive Julia Squire said newly diagnosed renal patients would still need to have their initial treatment in Townsville.

"Once established they can then dialyse on the island," she said. "We continue to have very productive discussions with the Shire and the community and we are really delighted to have been able to deliver what the community has told us it needs."

Mrs Squire said an additional dialysis chair would be available at the Joyce Palmer Health Service for patients undergoing dialysis for end-stage renal failure.

"We are currently looking at how we can schedule shifts for dialysis that will enable our patients to get the maximum benefit of the extra chair," she said.

Mrs Squire said the upgrade would include new water treatment equipment, new

electrical and air-conditioning systems and some structural work to increase the floor space.

"While the upgrade is underway, we'll be training more nurses in renal dialysis," she said.

"This is fantastic news for island residents.

"Once they are stabilised, Palm Island residents will be able to dialyse with the support of family and loved ones and without having to leave the island."

Talking the walk or walking the talk?



Palm Island's newest club has got people talking as well as walking – or should that be walking as well as talking?

Walking club member Martha Marks is pictured (*above right*) after walking to the airport on 26th February with husband and wife team Fernando and Cristina Rosa and their 14-year-old daughter Crizza Rosa.

"We have walked from the area near the Council offices," Martha said.

Fernando and Cristina are medical missionaries staying on Palm and the encourage anybody wanting to improve their fitness level to join them.

Sea wall progress in Minister's sights



Pictured L-R: Michael Castors, Josh Geia, Aggie Wotton, Federal Minister Nigel Scullion, Cr Alf Lacey, Kevin Castors and Palm Island Council Director of Works & Facilities Orlando De Biasi

WHILST on the Island Federal Minister Nigel Scullion inspected new sea walls being built under the Palm Island Foreshore Reconstruction Project.

Extensive damage to the Palm foreshore caused by Cyclone Yasi in February 2011 triggered the redevelopment, funded by the Federal and State Governments under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

The work has been done with a combination of construction skills held by people from Palm Island as well as specialist contractors.

Mayor Alf Lacey accompanied Mr Scullion during his inspection and the Minister

was particularly impressed with the work done by a Palm Island gang which included Kevin Castors, Josh Geia, Aggie Wotton and Michael Castors.

“This work has all been done by Palm Islander people,” Cr Lacey said.



Out & About

ENJOYING THE FORESHORE before the weather turned up these young girls – Stephanie, 12, Ririsha, 13, Jaisheree, 13, Vevonica, 13, and Lottie, 12 – were keen to have their picture taken for the *Palm Island Voice*.

New staff on board for newest PCYC youth projects and programs

PCYC would like to introduce several new staff appointments to the community.

Firstly, Aaron Thaiday Jantzen is once again on board with Bwgcolman Radio 97.3FM, which is managed and operated by local community members in line with Indigenous Broadcasting Program objectives to support direct local control over content.

The station provides 10 hours of local pre-recorded interviews, talk-back, community announcements, news/weather, music requests and happenings every day.



Similarly the Indigenous Community Sport and Recreation Program (ICSRP) is also to be jointly coordinated by Selena Hughes and Delena Foster.

Everyone from 5–100–years–old is the target of this program, aimed at increasing opportunities to participate in high quality sports and recreational activities.

The program supports increasing the capacity of communities themselves to plan, deliver and manage local activities appropriate to local needs.

ALSO THIS WEEK the PCYC launched the Palm Island Youth Development and Leadership Activity on Wednesday 12 March including a formal introduction for the community to several programs and initiatives including the new Palm Island Youth Council, youth interagency network, **CAMP OPAL**, and the Youth Mentor Support Group. See the next Issue of the *Palm Island Voice* for more info and pics!!



Palm Island's primary youth support program, the Youth at Risk Initiative (YARI), will be jointly coordinated by Mere Ponga and Yolanda Kerr.

YARI is about providing a range of services which are flexible and responsive to the highest priorities and needs of vulnerable young people. Young people in most need of support are those at risk of homelessness or involvement in the youth justice and child safety systems. The program also focuses on integrating service provision without duplication while reducing

administration compliance burdens.

The program is primarily aimed at 10–18–year–olds, as well as 19–25–year–olds.



New subdivision open for business and welcome

THERE were emotional scenes on Palm Island late last month, as brothers Moe and Keith Bligh unveiled a plaque to officially open the new Kitchener Bligh subdivision named in honour of their late father.

Special guests the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion and Queensland Minister for Housing and Public Works Tim Mander were at the ceremony, along with about 100 people including Mayor Alf Lacey, Councillors Mislam Sam, Frank Conway, Eddie Walsh and Roy Prior and several Elders.

Kitchener Bligh was a hard working Palm Islander who played a vital role in local construction.

“It was a very happy day for Palm Island and these new houses will be good for people,” Mr Keith Bligh said.

“This has made me think of Kitchener.”

The subdivision is one of two, the other being at the old rodeo grounds with a third in planning stages.

Mr Scullion said new housing would help with overcrowding in existing social welfare housing.

“Palm Island residents have been living with a housing shortage and overcrowded conditions for some time,” he said.

“This project demonstrates both the Australian and Queensland Governments’ determination to

improve the circumstances of Palm Islanders.”

Mr Mander said 13 new houses were completed already and 32 more were on track for completion by later this year.

“171 refurbishments have also completed and there are more to come – these new houses have a six star energy rating and are designed to meet all local conditions,” Mr Mander said.

“The houses use cross ventilation and natural light to limit the need for air-conditioners, fans or artificial lighting.

“Palm Island Shire Council is completing external driveways, car ports, garden sheds and fencing.

“All concrete is coming from the local Batching Plant.”

Cr Lacey said the opening of the sub division was significant for Palm Islanders.

“This shines a beacon of hope for our people here,” Cr Lacey said.



FOR two years Lynndel Prior lived in a small caravan in the bush but now enjoys one of the new houses.

“This has been a dream come true for me and it is just so good to come home from work where I have a place of my own,” Ms Prior said. Lynndel is pictured in her yard with the old caravan next to her new residence.



HISTORY was made in the Council board room when Luella Bligh signed the deeds to the first 99-year home ownership lease on a Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) community in Queensland.

The Palm Island Council, CEO Ross Norman, Ministers Scullion and Mander and others witnessed the event.

“This is a first for Palm and a very historic day,” Cr Walsh said.

Cr Lacey said the home was purchased with Luella’s own money on her own land.

“This will encourage our people to have ownership,” Cr Lacey said.

Luella was delighted as she posed for a pic with her twin sister Leonie Hopkins.

“It is wonderful and my home is on Wallaby Point Road at Long Beach,” Luella said.

A large number of local, state and national media were on Palm Island for the occasion.



Palm Island Voice

Public &
Community Notices



The next RDO is this Friday,
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Issue #	DEADLINE	Day	Publication Date
150	THURSDAY 20 March	Thursday 27 March	
151	THURSDAY 3 April	Thursday 10 April	
152	THURSDAY 17 April	Thursday 24 April	
153	THURSDAY 1 May	Thursday 8 May	
154	THURSDAY 15 May	Thursday 22 May	
155	THURSDAY 22 May	Thursday 29 May	
156	THURSDAY 5 June	Thursday 12 June	
157	THURSDAY 19 June	Thursday 26 June	
158	THURSDAY 3 July	Thursday 10 July	
159	THURSDAY 17 July	Thursday 24 July	
160	THURSDAY 31 July	Thursday 7 August	
161	THURSDAY 14 August	Thursday 21 August	
162	THURSDAY 28 August	Thursday 4 September	
163	THURSDAY 11 September	Thursday 18 September	
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166	THURSDAY 23 October	Thursday 30 October	

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CATCH THE FIRE MINISTRIES

Invites You to Participate in Meetings on
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20-23 March 2014

Thursday 20 March
 Prayer & Reconciliation
 Palm Island PCYC 7pm

Saturday 22 March
 QCWA Hall
 134 Denham St
 Townsville 6.30pm

Friday 21 March
 Walk for Love And
 Peace - Stone Jetty
 Palm Island 8am

Sunday 23 March
 Full Gospel Church
 77 Ross River Rd
 Mundingburra 10am

Saturday 22 March
 Prayer for Repentance
 Junction of Oxley St
 & The Strand
 Townsville 10am

Sunday 23 March
 QCWA Hall
 134 Denham St
 Townsville 6.30pm

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On the 8th February 2014 families and friends joined proud grandparents Heath and Jan & Josh and Paulette to celebrate the christening of **Lasharntai Sabine Lois Maree Akalene Prior Geia**, daughter of Daniel Geia and Jennifer Prior. It was also a very special day for Josh Geia who celebrated his birthday. One of the Godfathers was Daniel's brother Jayme, who travelled from Brisbane. Great grandmother Janet Durante (Paulette's mum) came from Mackay to meet her great granddaughter. Pictured above are the Grandparents, top right is the Godfathers and below them the Godmothers.



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Close match for Brayden, no match for Kathleen

A split points decision lost promising young boxer Brayden Nallajar a match against Mackay boxer Kyle Swanepoel earlier this month.

Brayden, aged 11, had travelled to Home Hill for a Sunstate Amateur Boxing League tournament hosted by Rock Solid Club.

He was the only Palm boxer to fight on the 18 bout card and did well against a more experienced opponent.

Trainer Ray Dennis thought Brayden did enough to win the close bout in the 35kg junior division.

“But that was the judge’s

decision, which we accepted,” Mr Dennis said.

The other Palm boxer to travel to Home Hill in the Burdekin was 15-year-old girl Kathleen Haines for whom an opponent could not be found.

“Her only possible opponent was an 18-year-old who was 10kg heavier and I didn’t want that,” Mr Dennis said.

“Kathleen has now had four bouts for two wins and her losses have been to bigger girls.”

He said he wanted to thank Kevin Castors who drove the small team to Home Hill, and Raymond Sibley from the Palm service station who helped with sponsorship.

A much bigger team of boxers will compete at the North Queensland Games in Townsville in the first week of April.

“We will have at least six boxers and maybe as many as eight,” Mr Dennis said.

In the News...

On 3 March the Townsville Bulletin reported Palm’s new \$40 million development plan ‘aims to put Palm on the map’.

The story details the new housing and infrastructure projects along with plans to ‘foster tourism projects’, including a community park and the long-held hope for a community swimming pool.

Lynndel Prior, Luella Bligh and Mayor Alf Lacey were all quoted in the article, along with local MP John Hathaway who told journalist Anthony Templeton Palm Island was ‘moving in the right direction’.

MEANWHILE the Courier-Mail focus was on reinvention and the call for tourists.

State Housing Minister Tim Mander and Mayor Alf Lacey were quoted.

“We’re not the little poor black brother sitting over on an island anymore ... we’re a thriving community,” Mr Lacey told journalist Tanya Chilcott.



Playing around the schools...



Late last month Bwgcolman Junior Secondary Sports Club visited Shalom Christian College to play rugby league and netball.

The trip was a great success with all students representing our school and community with dignity and pride.

While the netball side loss narrowly at 22-26, the rugby league side won 24-12 over their Shalom peers.

Both games were played in great spirits and a high level of sportsmanship was shown

from all teams.

Moira Murray and Diane Fulford were two of the stand-out performers in the netball game, while Levi Baira, Markus Ketchup, Ricky Johnson and Darryl Richardson were just some of the many stand-out performers in the rugby league game.

The students selected had

all achieved the attendance and behaviour goals they had set in class, which will be an ongoing criteria for members of the club.

The next event on the horizon is a trip to Yarrabah in week nine. Training began last week and all junior secondary students are eligible for selection.

