



# PALM ISLAND VOICE

Issue 230  
Thursday 22 June 2017

\*\*\*FREE\*\*\*

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



## In the league of the greats

Ray Dennis is already a legend on Palm Island for his contribution as a boxing trainer but will be recognised further afield next month when inducted into the Queensland Boxing Hall of Fame.

Mr Dennis and Townsville-based Neil Pattel, a former Australian professional champion in both the welterweight and middleweight divisions, will travel to Yatala in southern Queensland for the induction on July 16.

Ironically Mr Dennis trained Mr Pattel when he was a rising amateur star.

Uncle Ray as he is known affectionately on Palm Island and beyond as a mark of respect, doesn't like giving self praise.

But Sunstate Amateur Boxing League President Scooter Hooper who has a close association with Palm boxing, was delighted to provide testimony.

"I am lucky enough to be Ray's friend," he said.

"The word that is used far too often these days is Legend, however Uncle Ray is one of the men who deserves to be called that.

"I have known Ray for 40 years now and have become especially close over the past seven years.

"He has been a rock to so many children over the years be it as boxing trainer, mentor, Uncle or friend.

"The unrecognised work he has done for boxing in Queensland but especially in Townsville and Palm Island just can't be explained as people will not believe it.

"Ray would go hungry and spend his pension on food or wraps or other gear needed by his fighters, or to travel."

*(Continued next page...)*



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“But that’s the difference – they aren’t just his fighters, everyone who has come through the doors of the gym and stayed a while becomes more like one of his children, than just another person who he trained,” Scooter Hooper said.

“He cries when they lose and looks to blame himself, he gives them guidance on life’s road and this is often speaking from his own life experiences.

“He lives in a tin shed that leaks when it rains, has to walk through another room that is used by everyone in the Barge Company to go to the toilet or shower.

“But never complains, he just says, ‘at least they gave me somewhere to live’.

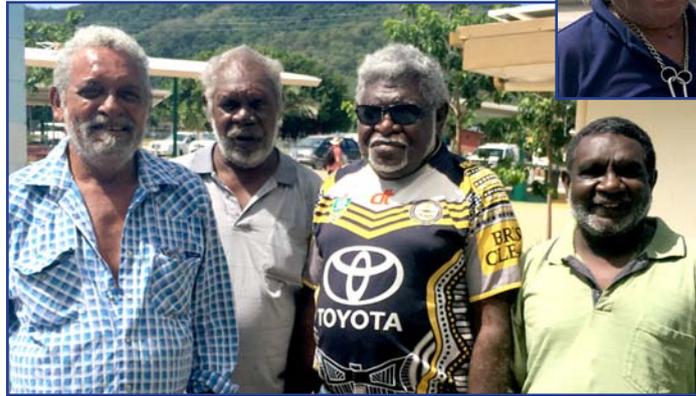
“I could go on for days about the massive impact he has had in giving so many on Palm Island a reason, to put it bluntly, to keep living.

“He’s an inspiration to so many people of all walks of life, myself included.

“He is also respected by past greats of both football and boxing who he was also involved with in their younger years.

“Those include Neil Pattel, Junior Thompson, Doug Sam, Colin Scott, Ricky Dallachy, the Geia boys, Clays and others too numerous to mention.”

## Old mates’ happy with return visit



*Pics thanks to Cr Eddie Walsh*

Earlier this year two visitors from Cooktown said they were ‘shocked’ at how much Palm Island had changed – ‘good ways’, of course!

John Allum and Calvin O’Burns live in Cooktown with their wives and families these days, but both wish they could come home again.

They are pictured here with locals Earl Conway and Noel King.

Mr Allum said the last time he was on Palm was for school mates’ funerals – the late Ray ‘Jacko’

Foster and Uncle Richard Conway.

Also ‘in from the cold’ was former St Michael’s boy Cephuis Stanley, who moved away 24 years ago and now lives in Whyalla, South Australia. He was welcomed back by school mate Ken Prior who insisted it not be so long between visits in future!

*Spectacular! Harriet Hulthen and grandson NaQarne Oui enjoying the elephants in Gweru, Zimbabwe.*



# Mission Songs Project live on Palm



Mission Songs Project was an initiative taken up by musician Jesse Lloyd to research and present a collection of Indigenous songs that were composed and performed from 1900 to 1999.

Jesse's focus was on the Christian missions, state run settlements and native camps where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were relocated.

Honouring the seven men who lead the 1957 Palm Island strike, last Saturday's performance featured singers Jessie Lloyd, Deline Briscoe, Emma Donovan and Jessica Hitchcock.

After searching for the secular songs that were sung after church, Mission Songs Project looked to explore the day to day life of the mission days,

from cultural identity to love and loss.

These unique songs consist of almost forgotten stories that shed light into the history of our Indigenous elders, families and communities.

The songs are available on CD and have also been performed in Melbourne, Sydney, and now...Palm Island's own Coolgaree Bar & Grill in a concert dedicated to the late Alma Geia.

Contributing artists to the project have included Peena,

Cedric, Lillian, Delphine and Joe Geia, Jeremy Beckett, Elverina Johnson, Will Kepa, Seaman Dan, Roger Knox, Lou Bennett, Stephen Pigram, William Barton, Marlene Cummins, Maxine Briggs and Archie Roach.

You can find out more about the Mission Songs Project on Facebook and online:  
<http://www.facebook.com/missionsongsproject/>  
<http://missionsongsproject.com/>



*LEFT: Back Genami Geia; Leah Dabea Virginia Malone, Jessie Lloyd, Jenny Ketchell, Lynelda Geia; ABOVE: Councillor Robert Castors, Kevin Castors, Deline Briscoe, Bernadine Castors, Teresa Creed & Melita Murphy (Pics with thanks to Leah Dabea & Bernadine Castors)*

# Indigenous Workers strikes a chord

It is 60 years since the Strike of 57, during which Willie Thaiday, Albert Geia, Eric Lymburner, Sonny Sibley, Bill Congoo, George Watson and Gordon Tapau, all of whom have passed on, fought for justice, better conditions and rights for their people.

The seven men were branded as troublemakers and were removed from Palm Island on June 14 of 1957.

As part of this year's commemorations, a special Indigenous Workers' Conference was held in Townsville last Friday.

Speakers, facilitated by Jeff McMullen, included Federal Member for Herbert Cathy O'Toole, Deputy Premier Jackie Trad and State Member for Townsville Scott Stewart.

MC for the event was striker descendant Aaron Thaiday.

Several respected elders, who are sons and daughters of the strikers, gave the audience first hand accounts of the hardship they faced living on Palm Island in 1957.

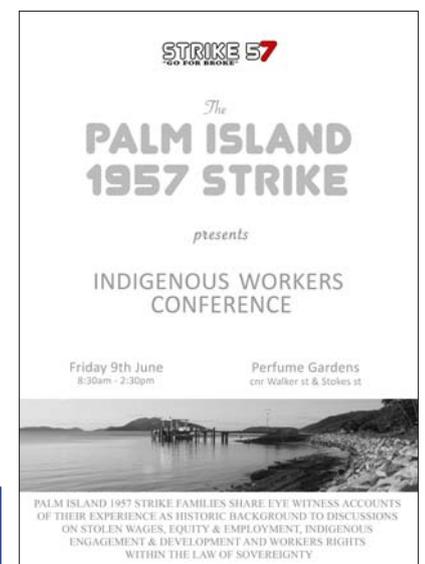
They had to eat food with weevils and endure terrible living conditions, their money was withheld and subsequently stolen, and they had no rights to improve their conditions, borne out by first hand accounts of seeing weapons pointed at the strikers when they attempted to change things for the better.

After the speeches, four panels

of people discussed a wide range of issues.

Members of the Congoo, Geia, Lymburner, Sibley, Tapau, Thaiday and Watson families, as a collective,

organised a three-day 60th anniversary event on Palm Island this week, we'll have full coverage in our next edition of the *Palm Island Voice*.



# Conference in Townsville



Included on the Indigenous Workers' Conference agenda was the launch of the First Nation's Workers Alliance (FNWA), which will give a voice to workers under the Community Development Program (CDP).

The CDP, which began in July 2015, covers about 33,000 unpaid workers, of which 31,000 or 80% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders.

Those under the CDP are forced to work long hours to receive welfare payments.

Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Secretary Sally Mc Manus said CDP was a national disgrace.

"The CDP is discriminatory on the basis of race, it places harsher conditions on its overwhelmingly Indigenous workforce than any unemployment program operating anywhere else in the country," she said.

"For many people in the cities, for many politicians, these workers are out of sight and out of mind, but we want all of Australia to know what they are being subjected to, and that the union movement is deeply committed to ending this discriminatory policy."

Ms Mc Manus said the policy forces Indigenous people to work for no wages and treats them as second class citizens.

"It's no accident that we have launched the FNWA on the anniversary of the Palm Island Strike," she said.

"While we've seen progress since 1957, we have a long way to go and the FNWA will play a key role in pursuing progress for workers trapped in the CDP."

CDP workers can join the FNWA for free, Indigenous Union members can get a \$26 per annum membership.

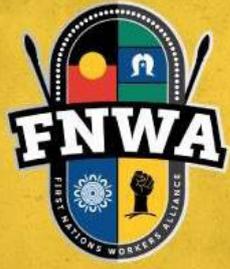
Non-indigenous people can become a supporter for \$52 a year.

For more information see <http://www.fnwa.org.au>

THERE IS STRENGTH  
IN NUMBERS!

ARE YOU WITH US?

Fight for the rights of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander CDP workers.



FNWA.COM.AU

# Palm Island Voice



Public &  
Community Notices



Don't forget!!!  
The DEADLINE for the  
NEXT  
PALM ISLAND VOICE  
(231) is

**Thursday  
22 June**  
FOR PUBLICATION  
**Thursday  
29 June**

Check out our  
Facebook page!

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the Editor, Christine Howes,

on 0419 656 277 or

[palmislandvoice@chowes.com.au](mailto:palmislandvoice@chowes.com.au)



## POSITIONS AVAILABLE

The following positions are currently open for application

### Safe Haven

1 x part time Coordinator

2 x full time support workers

3 x part time support workers

2 x part time patrol workers

Applications close Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2017

To be considered for this position, please submit to [mmccann@picc.com.au](mailto:mmccann@picc.com.au):

1. A completed employment application form (employment application form available from the Children & Family Centre or the HUB Mall Office, Palm Island)
2. A copy of your resume



**Operating Hours for  
Council are Monday –  
Friday 8am – 5pm**

If you have any  
questions please  
contact Reception  
on 4770 1177 or  
4770 0200



Palm Island  
Aboriginal  
Shire Council  
has 1,528  
'likes' on  
Facebook!!!

*At the request of the family, Palm Island Voice would like to present readers with the photographs below in memory of the late Colyning Walsh, beloved wife of 40 years to Cr Eddie Walsh.*



*Top: at The Range College, Rockhampton & with Pamela Johnson Barry and Hazel Rowrow at the Townsville Show; Above: Pamela Johnson Barry (taken in May 2017) & with Daly Cherry-Evans*

# Townsville Mabo Day 2017



*LEFT: Helen Akee & Dulcie Isaro; Florence Onus and former NRL star David Peachey; Ingai Prior was a volunteer at Central Park; and, the Wulgurakaba Walkabouts dancers. ABOVE: Felicity Bourne and daughter Marciah Oliffe, aged 3, at the Mabo Day street march; Jenny Wyles, Carl Wyles and Irene Thaiday; and, Morris Cloudy and Billy Thaiday.*