



## Mayor takes Palm Island to the top

In a 'once in a generation' opportunity Mayor Alf Lacey has met with Prime Minister Tony Abbott and spoken directly with Federal Treasurer Joe Hockey during a trip to Canberra.

Cr Lacey travelled with five other Mayors from the region to lobby for economic development and infrastructure spending.

The others were Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill, Charters Towers' Frank Beveridge, Burdekin's Bill Lewis and Hinchinbrook's Rodger Bow. The main catalyst was the Northern Australia White paper and all believe the region needs more promotion in future infrastructure spending.

Cr Lacey said Palm Island needed economic development.

"This was a once in a generation opportunity," he said.

"Economic development will allow families to start businesses.

"We have to continue to strive for that for our future and that of our children."

He said that was vital so Palm Island could move away from reliance on Government welfare payments.

"There is a lot of unemployment on Palm and we have to have economic development to create jobs – changes are coming with Centrelink as well," he said.

Whilst in Canberra Cr Lacey also spoke about funding for the beautification of the Palm Island foreshore.

"We want to have a walking track across from the CBD to the sporting ground," he said.



Cr Beveridge said the region including Palm Island was moving into the new Asian Century where the demand for produce and services by our neighbour's will drive our regions jobs.

"Our group was very diverse with Alf Lacey from the Palm Island Council, myself from a rural/mining council," Cr Beveridge said. Mayors Bill Lewis and Roger Bow from coastal, sugar/small crops councils, and mayor Jenny Hill from the largest city in northern Australia.

"We were a strong diverse group representing over 250, 000 people and believe that we got a very good hearing from the Federal Government."



# Congrats to year 12 graduates!

The end of 2014 marks a historic and joyous occasion for the Palm Island community as eight students at Bwgcolman Community School recently completed Year 12, with five students completing their Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE).

Neil Baira, Kenny Baira and Cassian Tanner have already landed training positions with Mendi Constructions, and a heartfelt congratulations is extended to Christine Cannon, Alvina Walton, Keanu Lowatta-Creed, Retemoi Sam and Allan Aden who are exploring a myriad of options, ranging from further studies at university to working in the local school as a teacher's aide.

The leadership and staff of the Bwgcolman Community School and the Cathy Freeman Foundation were delighted with this good news because together they have travelled the journey of these students, since CFF began working on

Palm Island in 2007 when these students started high school.

Bwgcolman Community School principal Jeff Jones said school attendance and performance was gradually increasing with the number of graduates doubling this year compared to the three Year 12 graduates in 2013 and one student finishing Year 12 in 2011.

"We're starting to get real traction and are clearly moving in the right direction," he said.

"Kids are seeing that the school can provide a viable local alternative to education and can expand their opportunities beyond school.

"Attaining their QCE tells a story about these kids.

"It shows that they will turn

up, that they have got the self-discipline and resilience, and that they are going places.

"At the Year 6 graduation this week, it was clear that the younger students are looking up to these home grown role models.

"The graduation ceremony was embraced by the whole community and the Bwgcolman family.

"It was a very emotional day because there was a shared vision and it's clear that community cares deeply and values deeply these students' achievements in school.

"It was great to join students, staff and community to celebrate what these kids have achieved for themselves.



*L-R Alvina Walton, Keanu Lowatta-Creed, Neil Baira, Kenny Baira and Cassian Tanner*





“It was something special.” Acting-CEO of the Cathy Freeman Foundation Jamie Howden said the response from the community was brilliant. He said CFF was immensely proud to have played a part in the students’ journey and the odds they had overcome to complete Year 12.

“These students are a wonderful example of what is possible, and it is inspiring to see just how proud they are of themselves and one another,” he said. “There wasn’t a dry eye on the day of the graduation ceremony, as the entire Bwgcolman family joined hands to create an arch way for students to encounter as they took their final strides in school.

“It was particularly touching to hear one young male student publically say just how much he loved a teacher and how grateful for he was for everything he had learned.

“It’s days like these that make the partnership between Bwgcolman Community

School and CFF so incredibly worthwhile.

“It wasn’t that long ago that Jeff and I sat around a bonfire on the beach with community leaders and designed a plan suited to creating these kind of results, and we congratulate the Bwgcolman Family for making it happen.

In 2015, there are 12 year 11 students enrolled for Year 12 and another 28 students will be joining Year 7. On 3 December, 227 Starting Block Awards were presented to deserving students at Bwgcolman Community School and St Michael’s Catholic School on Palm Island for their excellent Term 4 results in Attendance, Behaviour and Literacy which also sets the tone for another prosperous year ahead.

CFF was also proud to announce two additional students from Palm Island also finished Year 12 via

the Scholarships program in conjunction with program partner, Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) and school on the mainland.

CFF also congratulated Moewaiya Youngblutt and Jerri Prior-Blackley on their resilience and determination to complete Year 12 in 2014.

Ten students from Palm Island finished Year 12 with the support of their community in 2014, which they said was a wonderful way to finish the school year.



Top: 2nd from left Neil Baira, 3rd from left Cassian Tanner, 4th from left Kenny Baira Above: Neil Baira

# Potential for tourism under discussion

Potential development in tourism was the subject of meetings on Palm Island with consultants Tony O'Connor and Allison Rossetto last week, as reported in Issue 168 of the *Palm Island Voice*.

The consultations were part of work being done with the Queensland Government and the Council to develop a tourism strategy and action plan.

The strategy and action plan will explore if and how tourism should be developed within a small business framework.

The consultations are one part of a three-staged process to receive community input about tourism development – if it is seen as desirable and what sort of tourism is acceptable to the community.

In the first stage consultants talked to key stakeholders on and off the island including businesses, government and non-government organisations and tourism operators.

The current second stage is focussing on community input, while the third stage will seek even broader community input through talking with key groups on the island.

Mr O'Connor (*pictured*) said the action plan would focus on short term – less than one year actions – and medium to long term actions.

“The consultations last week were really very positive,” he said.

“We spoke to more than 50 residents and the general message was that tourists would be welcomed to Palm Island.

“Residents identified many reasons that tourism development would be good including jobs and

income for the island, especially for the youth, changing the image of Palm Island to a positive place, an opportunity to share the island’s culture, and opportunities for locals to start-up small businesses on the island and to make these and existing businesses more sustainable – actually the list goes on” said Ms Rossetto.

Residents also had an opportunity to provide input on a feedback flyer which was still available at the Council reception desk.

The benefits of tourism development identified by residents closely align with the community priorities identified in the RJCP Community Action Plan (CAP) of 2014.

The top five priorities in the CAP were employment, maintaining cultural heritage, small business development and shops, infrastructure development and school attendance.

“While we saw the close relationship between tourism development and employment, infrastructure development, maintaining heritage and small business development, we were somewhat surprised when residents told us that welcoming tourists would also help with school attendance,” Ms Rossetto said.

“We were told that having tourists on the Island would help young people to learn to interact with a broader range of people



which in turn would help them if they needed to leave the island for boarding school.

“Residents also felt that young people may reconsider their behaviour if there were visitors present on the island.”

The conversation with residents also identified some of the barriers to tourism development and concerns by a few residents.

Some of the barriers included the need to clean up the Island and for residents to take more pride, the number and care of dogs and horses and the lack of start-up funding to develop small business opportunities.

“Concerns about tourism development are real and we will closely take these into consideration,” Mr O'Connor said.

“Tourism development needs to help deliver the community’s goals, not work against them.

“We were happy that people felt comfortable enough to raise these issues so that we can consider what can be done to address them.”

Community consultations will continue into early next year before a draft strategy and action plan is written.



# Mayor challenges local MP over Palm Island's existence

Mayor Alf Lacey has challenged Federal Member for Herbert Ewen Jones to “come to the island to face the people” after the politician reportedly questioned publicly why the Aboriginal Shire should exist.

Townsville-based Mr Jones was quoted in the Townsville Bulletin on 12 December commenting on Bureau of Statistics jobless statistics showing Palm Island had a rate of 49.8%.

“Private people starting up investment that’s where your answer is,” he said.

“The question is why do we have Palm Island?”

Cr Lacey who was in Townsville attending a Mayor’s Conference called a press conference to respond to the comments.

Print, radio and television media attended including the Koori Mail.

“If Mr Jones is brave enough he should come to Palm Island and face the people over these inflammatory comments at a public forum,” Cr Lacey said.

“The Prime Minister just yesterday was pushing for a referendum to recognize First People’s right in the constitution and he comes out with this.

“It appears that the left hand doesn’t know what the right hand is talking about.

“If he questions why Palm Island should exist then I ask why should Australia exist.”



Cr Lacey said the comments had spread fear and uncertainty on Palm Island which has a permanent population of about 4,500.

“Similar comments by Mr Jones’ predecessor Peter Lindsay some years ago caused trauma for our people,” he said. “Mr Lindsay came to our island and I call on Ewen to do the same. My challenge to him is to bring it on, let’s have an open debate.”

Cr Lacey also called on the Federal and State Governments to look at giving jobs to local people instead of flying in workers from the mainland.

“Five planes come to Palm on week days with workers

and I know of a case where a receptionist from the mainland works here in a Government Department,” he said. “You don’t need a university degree to be a receptionist. Why can’t a local have that job. I understand with doctors and medical staff but there are many jobs our people could do.”

Cr Lacey said that with Government red tape reduction and some skills programs taxpayer’s money could be saved by giving locals these jobs.

In response to Cr Lacey’s comments Mr Jones told the Townsville Bulletin the next day he had asked a “rhetorical question and was not suggesting the island be shut down”.

*We celebrated Stable on Palm Island 2014 on the weekend of 28th, 29th and 30th November writes Sister Robyn Brady.*

Our preparations were begun back early October and there were various meetings to prepare for the event.

Our program consisted of BBQ tea provided by the Palm Island Council followed by an opening ceremony of welcome to country, smoking ceremony and traditional dances provided by St Michael's students dance group.

In the absence of the mayor, Councillor Walsh welcomed all.

There were over 70 volunteers from Townsville who worked in teams for setting up certain areas and catering.

Following the official opening we were entertained by various groups from Townsville and the Burdekin.

Saturday morning's program consisted of Children and Youth activities from 9.30-12.30.

Joni McCourt, Katie Armit and Lian Maguire were responsible for the children's activities.

These consisted of making reindeer heads from paper cups painting and adding eyes, nose and antlers. Other activities were hand printed banners on hessian with many forms of decorations added.

The children who attended also made Christmas cards and calendars.

There was a slow start to the morning, but it progressed to be a hive of activity for the rest of the morning.

At the conclusion to the morning the children were invited to share lunch with the elders of the Island community.

Before the weekend Joni had visited the school to encourage participation in a Nativity play. The school took this up and each Monday a group of children practiced the play with some costumes and narration. We had hoped that these children would be there on the Saturday evening for the play, but it didn't turn out that way.

Come Saturday evening we gathered a group of children to be the various characters in the Nativity play – Joseph, Mary, angels, shepherds, and kings. This was a happy occasion. Saturday evening was set aside for the Palm Island locals to perform.

We had island dances, and singing groups, the children nativity play and Sr Robyn had



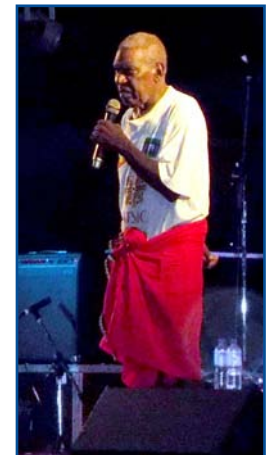
gathered some locals together for Carol singing.

We had quite a few practices leading up to the event. The adult Nativity tableau was filled this year with our local people. The costuming was lent to us from Stable on the Strand – they had a definite aboriginal design about them.

Our various characters were more than happy to participate in this.

We hope this will inspire our local church members to attend their various Christmas services over Christmas.









## *Christmas Greetings from Palm Island Shire Council*

*The Mayor, Councillors, Chief Executive Officer and the Staff of the Palm Island Shire Council, extends our appreciation to you for your assistance throughout 2014*

*We look forward to a continuous working relationship in the future.*

*With every wish, for a very Merry Christmas and the Happiest of New Years*



*Cr. Alf Lacey – Mayor  
Cr. Edward Walsh – Deputy Mayor  
Frank Conway – Councillor  
Roy Prior – Councillor  
Mislam Sam – Councillor  
Ross Norman – Chief Executive Officer*



*Progressing Our Community*



*"Burgeolman Moving Forward"*

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*Text & pic provided by Gough Tanks.*





# Palm Island Voice

## Public & Community Notices



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### Attention all community members 2014 Xmas break rubbish pick up times

Monday December 22	Top end.
Tuesday December 23	Bottom end, farm, chook city, Kitchener Bligh estate.
Wednesday December 24	Butler bay, reservoir.
Thursday December 25	<b>Christmas Day</b>
Friday December 26	<b>Boxing day</b>
Monday December 29	Top end.
Tuesday December 30	Bottom end, farm, chook city, Kitchener Bligh estate.
Wednesday December 31	Butler bay, reservoir.
Thursday January 1	<b>New years</b>
Friday January 2	<b>Council RDO</b>

These will be your rubbish pick up times due to the public holidays and councils RDO during the Xmas Break. The rubbish collection then goes back to your normal days starting from the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2015.

PIASC

**Palm Island PCYC**  
would like to remind the community after school care service has resumed and is available for children 5-12-years-old from 3.30-6pm and all day during school holidays.



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

If you have any questions please contact  
4770 1177



Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council has 476 'likes' on Facebook!!!

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AND OTHER PUBLIC/COMMUNITY  
MESSAGES ARE FREE (subject to space)!  
See contact details below!*

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**THE NEXT PALM ISLAND VOICE  
DEADLINE (for Issue 170)  
will be THURSDAY 8 January for  
publication on Thursday 15 January**

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CONTINUE TO SUPPORT YOU!!!**



# Siblings have no rivals



**BROTHER** and sister Roy and Rothana Baira have been on no less than four winning Allblacks carnivals teams at different ends of Queensland over the past month or two.

They were Queensland's biggest carnival, the Murri Knockout at Redcliffe, Townsville's Bindal event (second biggest) and also the Zenadth Kes, which is the largest carnival in the Torres Strait.

Rothana was a member of the champion Inala Bears team which won the Arthur Beetson Foundation Deadly Choices ladies section of the Murri Knockout.

Held from September 25 to 28 at Redcliffe's Dolphins Park, 27 men's and 11 women's sides competed and it was easily Queensland's biggest Allblacks carnival of 2014.

Forward Rothana Baira shone

for Inala Bears which beat Iris Saltner Memorial side 28-6 in the decider which was broadcast live nationally on NITV.

Three weeks later on October 19 they were both members of winning teams at the Zenadth Kes on TI, the biggest carnival in the Torres Strait.

Roy was part of the Kulpiyam side which beat Kuruwai Warriors 22-14 in the grand final at TI's Ken Brown Memorial Oval.

A game before Rothana was a member of the Deddeyal Gummas team which won the ladies final 22-8 over Eagles.

On October 12, Roy was

amongst the best players for Cannonballs which won the final of Townsville's the Bindal Allblacks carnival contested by 16 men's teams.

Cannonball beat Woorabinda Warriors 28-20 in the final at Townsville Sports Reserve.

There was no ladies division at Townsville denying Rothana a chance to also be part of a carnival treble.

Speaking to the *Palm Island Voice* from Horn Island Airport on her way home from TI, Rothana said she was overwhelmed by her wonderful treatment on TI.

"Up here we are treated as family and that is very emotional," Rothana said.



# Vigoro champ not out

PALM Island Community Company Programs Support Officer Kamara Thompson scooped the pool of major individual awards at the annual representative vigoro matches between Townsville and Cairns earlier this month.

The 31-year-old Kamara was amongst a large number of Indigenous players who competed when teams from North Queensland's two largest cities met at Townsville's Queen's Park on 6 and 7 December in A Grade, Veterans and under 18 grades.

Townsville won A Grade and Veterans whilst Cairns took out under-18 honours.

The sides played each other three times in each division.

Kamara represented Townsville and took out the batting aggregate and average awards with 77 runs scored.

Her 61 not out also earned her the highest score trophy.

Kamara shared in the bowling

aggregate award with Krichelle Ross of Palm descent with both snaring 10 wickets.

Kamara won the bowling average with 3.4 and shared in the run outs off a bowler with Krichelle Ross with four apiece.

In the under-18 grade Cairns were worthy winners after qualifying games 7 points to Townsville's six.

Townsville took out the Veteran's Division.

Kamara also starred in the Townsville A grade vigoro fixtures on Saturday 13th December.

Her side Rabbitos scored 1/116, Kamara scored 40 not out and Krichelle 37.

Rabbitos defeated Rebels 9/82 by 34 runs on the 1st innings.

Vigoro is a team sport which originally combined elements of cricket and tennis, although in its current form it may be more similar to cricket and baseball.

The concrete pitch is slightly shorter in length than a cricket pitch and the balls are much lighter than those for cricket, and the bat has a different shape with a long handle resembling the shape of a paddle.

There are two teams of 12 players who bat and field two innings each (except in the event that a team wins with an innings in hand).

The aim of the game is for a team to score more runs than the opposition team.

There are no overs and the batters bat from one end only.

Two bowlers bowl alternately and can incorporate any type of "throwing" action as long as the ball is released above the shoulder (i.e. not underarm).

If the ball is hit forward of the crease, the batters must run.

Fours and sixes also apply where the batter hits the ball past the boundary markers.

In addition to shots made off the bat, byes and leg-byes add to the team's score.

Players may be dismissed by the same methods as in cricket – bowled, caught, run out, stumped, leg before wicket, hit wicket, handled ball and hit the ball twice.





# Footy 'stalwart' takes coaching camp opportunity



A **GENUINE** Palm Island rugby league stalwart is an apt description of Cr Roy Prior, who has been selected to do his Certificate 2 coaching course at Townsville's JCU campus.

For decades Cr Prior has been involved in Palm Island Rugby League from playing to administration, coaching and a strong supporter.

Cr Prior will do the course at the Queensland Rugby League Junior Maroons Townsville Summer Camp at JCU from 15–19 December.

QRL Divisional Manager Scott Nosworthy said he thought Roy was the first person from Palm Island to attend the course in many years.

“What he will learn from the week and sessions with coaches like Paul Green and David Furner from the Cowboys, Kristian Woolf from the Townsville Blackhawks, Kim Williams from the Mackay Cutters and Joe O’Callaghan will be invaluable,” he said.

“And he will be able to take this information and knowledge back to Palm Island to help develop and grow the game.

“It is a long week but the benefits for those who attend will be enormous.

“Roy has been a successful coach on Palm Island for many years but what he will learn will help representative

teams and players from the Island to show their immense talents on football fields all over Queensland.”

The camp has become a perennial highlight of the Northern Division rugby league diary with strong relationships between the Division, North Queensland Cowboys and NRL Development formed over the event’s 28-year history.

