

Palm Island Voice



FREE!

Issue 448

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ABORIGINAL SHIRE COUNCIL

PLEASE note there may be images of deceased persons within this publication.

History made with citizenship ceremony

History was made on Palm Island last week when Mayor Alf Lacey and the Council accepted the pledges of three new Australian citizens in a civic ceremony held in the Council's Chambers.

Mayor Alf Lacey said he had thought long and hard about what they would do when the idea was first brought to him.

"A citizenship ceremony is not a thing in any First Nation communities in this country, because of the way Aboriginal and Islander communities have been set up," he said.

"I had to think about it for quite some time, actually, when the requests came through."

He said his civic responsibility as Mayor had led him to his decision.

"I had thought about it for a while, and I was thinking to myself 'it's important' because Australia is at a point in time in terms of ensuring that we



Pic by Christine Howes

Palm Island Health Services Director of Nursing Alison Gallagher and Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council finance officers Thien An Le and Thi Hong Quyen Ho with Mayor Alf Lacey at the ceremony last Wednesday.

– as Australians – need to work side by side to ensure we have better opportunities for our people," he said.

"I think it's really, really important that Palm does fly the flag. The research that I've done, there's no other First Nations community in the country that has ever conducted this type of ceremony. So it is history in the making."

Continues next page...

Our Council teams at work!



Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council's carpentry team was happy to smile for Palm Island Voice editor Christine Howes last Thursday morning. We have more of her pics to come, as we kick off a series of staff and community profiles in our next issue!

Pic by Christine Howes

Citizenship ceremony makes history



State MP Adam Baillie, Palm Island Health Services Director of Nursing Alison Gallagher, Federal MP Phillip Thompson, Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council finance officers Thien An Le and Thi Hong Quyen Ho and Mayor Alf Lacey.

Community families, friends and the Palm Island Council were joined by Federal Member for Herbert Phillip Thompson, State Member for Townsville Adam Baillie and NQROC Chair and Charters Towers Mayor Liz Schmidt in welcoming the three new citizens, all of whom were much-valued workers in the Palm Island community.

Palm Island Health Services Director of Nursing Alison Gallagher and Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council finance officers Thien An Le and Thi Hong Quyen Ho said they were thrilled.

“I feel embraced by the community,” Ms Gallagher said.

“It’s making me tearful.

“I’m really just looking forward to being the best person I can be in this country.

“I’m very, very honoured.”

As the ceremony unfolded, Mayor Lacey reflected on the significance of all Australians standing together and the significance of the day for Palm Island.

“We’re pleased, on behalf of the Palm Island people and the Bwngcolman people, to conduct this Australian citizenship ceremony.

“It’s important to our three new citizens, and it’s important to us.

“I think it shows the significance in terms of being part of our Australian community and our way of life.”

Federal Member Phillip Thompson said it was a special day.

“Not just because we get some more Australians, which is always great, but to have a citizenship ceremony done here on Palm Island,” he said.

“It is the first of its kind, the first around the nation and you are really paving the way going forward because you are embracing new Australians as the oldest culture in Australia.”

He said the three new citizens had made the country “better”.

“In a few moments, this country becomes a little bit better,” he said.

“When you make the citizenship pledge, you take on the privileges, responsibilities of Australian citizenship.

“From that moment, your journey and heritage will become a part of Australian story.

“We are privileged to share this beautiful country with First Nations Australians, the custodians of the world’s oldest continuing culture. Appreciating and understanding this truth is a vital part of what it means to be an Australian.

“Australia welcomes you as a full member of one of the most diverse nations on earth where our citizenship is a bond which unites us all. Australia welcomes you and everything you bring to Australia and today your new nation says to you, ‘Welcome home.’”



Pic thanks to Phillip Thompson



Pic thanks to Phillip Thompson



Pic. by Christine Howes



Pic by Christine Howes



Pic thanks to Phillip Thompson

Voices united at local government forum



Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council leaders travelled to Cairns to join First Nations leaders from across the state at the Local Government Association of Queensland's (LGAQ's) Indigenous Leaders' Forum (ILF).

Palm Island Mayor Alf Lacey said the forum provided an important opportunity for councils to speak with a united voice on matters that directly affect First Nations communities.

The Palm Island delegation included Mayor Alf Lacey, Deputy Mayor Mersane Oui, Councillor Ebanese Oui, Councillor Germaine Bulsey, and Chief Executive Officer Emma Bradbury.

Together, they participated in high-level discussions focused on strengthening economic development, improving community health outcomes, addressing housing shortages and reforming alcohol management policies.

“Economic advancement was a strong and consistent theme, reflecting the need to build real and sustainable local economies that create jobs, opportunity and

long-term prosperity,” Mr Lacey said.

“Another key issue raised during the forum was community-led health.

“While significant investment has been made through Closing the Gap initiatives, leaders emphasised outcomes were falling short and we have to be empowered to lead our own health solutions.

“Discussions highlighted the close links between health, housing, employment, community wellbeing and liveability.”

Housing pressures were also strongly emphasised, with councils calling for urgent action to address



New leaders Accord signals new partnership approach

A significant milestone for First Nations local government was reached with the inaugural meeting of the Queensland Indigenous Council Leaders Accord, a key component of the Indigenous Leaders' Forum (ILF) in Cairns earlier this month.

The new Accord brought Queensland's 17 First Nations councils and the Queensland Government into a formal partnership designed to ensure First Nations leaders have a direct seat at the policy-making table.

It represented a shift away from top-down approaches towards shared decision-making on matters that shape community liveability, economic development and self-determination.

Formally signed at the 2025 LGAQ Annual Conference as part of the Equal Partners in Government Agreement, the Accord was only the second sub-agreement under the framework, alongside the Rural and Remote Councils Compact.

Its establishment reflects long-standing advocacy by First Nations councils for greater recognition of local leadership, knowledge and lived experience.

Mayor Alf Lacey said the Accord marked an important step forward in ensuring governments genuinely listen to communities when developing policy.

"This agreement creates space for councils to clearly articulate their own priorities, rather than having solutions imposed from outside," he said.

"We want our communities to have the opportunity to make sure we're putting what we think is important to us – our priorities – up from our individual community."

Discussions focused on the need for

frank conversations about existing challenges, alongside a shared commitment to setting clear actions, responsibilities and time frames to deliver real outcomes. "Council leaders emphasised the importance of long-term planning," Mr Lacey said.

"We need sustainable progress, which means we need strategies that look well beyond short-term funding cycles.

"If we get the economics in our communities right, everything else will fall into place – but it can't just be business as usual.

"We can't just be focused on the tomorrow – we need plans for the next 20 to 50 years to ensure our communities can truly close the gap."



chronic overcrowding in remote and discrete communities.

"For Palm Island, where limited housing stock is accommodating a growing population, overcrowding continues to have a direct and negative impact on health, education and social outcomes," Mr Lacey said.

At the meeting, Mayors also called on the Federal Government to acknowledge their almost decade-long plea for funding to alleviate chronic overcrowding that had devastating impacts on health and education, and was holding their communities back.

"It's really important to the

future growth of our community, particularly for young families to move into a dwelling they can call their place – their home," Mr Lacey said.

The forum also provided an opportunity for councils to collectively raise concerns about the current approach to alcohol management plans.

"This was about letting the community decide for themselves rather than the one-size-fits-all blanket approach," he said.

"So what we've said to the current government is that we want an opportunity now, as individual communities, for locally led

decision-making that reflects our circumstances and strengths."

Mayor Alf Lacey said the forum was marked by robust and respectful discussions.

He said the ability for communities to speak directly to government about their priorities was critical in achieving meaningful and lasting change.

The forum also provided an opportunity for Events Coordinator Tanya Haines to connect and engage with event management professionals in advance of future events that Palm Island was working towards attracting.

[Watch this space for more...](#)

Mobile health service ready to deliver



A custom-built, innovative new Mobile Health and Aged Care Clinic will provide vital primary care services directly to the Palm Island community after it was delivered with support from Mobile Health Clinics Australia and the Palm Island Community Company late last month.

The service will focus on everyday health care, including general health check-ups, early intervention support and preventative care, particularly for older residents, directly responding to what the community said they needed.

Member for Townsville, Adam Baillie MP said strengthening health services and removing barriers to access would help ease pressure on existing services and improve long-term health outcomes for the Palm Island community.



Educators offered learning support

Palm Island was one of five remote Queensland communities to be visited twice by Speech Pathologist Sondha Alexander and her colleague Angeliqae De Aguiar earlier this year, as part of the SPELD Queensland and Autism Queensland Uplift for Discrete Communities pilot to support early years educators.

The team worked alongside educators and families at the Palm Island Children & Family Centre (PICC) and St Michael's and Bwngcolman Community School Kindergartens.

The visit included a parent information session at the Blue Building, an educator professional development day attended by participants across all three settings and hands-on classroom support.

The days were an opportunity to model language strategies during play, introduce visual supports and song boards, and support transitions.

The team said the warmth and commitment of Palm Island's early years community made their visit a privilege.

"We look forward to the connections that continue to grow from this work," they said.

A huge thank you to the PICC team for their generous hospitality in hosting sessions.



Fr Manh Le has no doubt it was the smell of freshly baked banana cake that drew the interest of several equine visitors to the church last week.

The four-legged visitors were well taken care of, for their troubles, as were their young friends who ventured a quick pat (and cake!) ...



GO BARRACUDAS!

Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council through the Community Betterment Fund is again supporting the PIJRL

An investment that backs our young players in their travels, strengthens community wellbeing and celebrates the pride, teamwork and future of rugby league on Palm Island for our community.



EOI - PALM ISLAND NETBALL

We need to start a New Club - come in support or nominate for the committee

1PM - TUE 12TH MAY

RUGBY CLUBHOUSE

NEW AND OLD WELCOME

SANDWICHES AND REFRESHMENTS



Council supports old/used battery collection

Embedded batteries are inside many everyday devices we use at home.

If these items end up in our bins, the batteries can get damaged, crushed or pierced, and this can spark a fire.

This puts our island, our council infrastructure, and our community at risk.

You'll find embedded batteries in things like Bluetooth speakers and headphones, vapes, electric toothbrushes, and kids' light-up toys. They are built into the device and can't be taken out by hand.

To help keep Palm Island safe, our community now has a place where you can drop off old devices with embedded batteries.

Please don't try to take the battery out yourself.

If it doesn't click out by hand, bringing in the whole item is the safest choice.

Where: Council Chambers Reception & Containers for Change Site (during open hours)

When: Until November 2026

What you can bring:

Bluetooth speakers and headphones

Vapes

Electric toothbrushes

Light-up or flashing toys

Shavers and personal care devices

Power banks and portable chargers

Cordless and robotic vacuums

Scooters, e-bikes and hoverboards

Wearable devices like smart watches and trackers

Remote-controlled toys

The service is free.

HOUSEHOLD BATTERY EMBEDDED COLLECTION

BATTERIES IN BINS ARE DANGEROUS AND MAY CAUSE A FIRE.

Keep our island safe!
Drop-off your old devices with built-in
batteries to the Council Chambers Reception,
or the Containers for Change site!



All batteries collected will be processed by our industry partner. The Household Embedded Battery Collection is proudly funded through the Queensland Government's Local Government Battery Collection Program.



THE NEXT *Palm Island Voice* DEADLINE*

(Issue 449*) will be Thursday 21 May

for publication on Tuesday 26 May



The *Palm Island Voice* is published FORTNIGHTLY (*unless we have paid advertising) by the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council. Members of the Palm Island community and local organisations are welcome to submit birthdays, community information, pics, yarns and letters to the Editor.

For advertising rates and/or more information contact the Editor, Christine Howes, on 0419 656 277 or at howeschowes@gmail.com. You can also follow us on Facebook, we have more than 3,400 followers! The *Palm Island Voice* is also available online at <http://www.chowes.com.au>

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

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

Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council has 7,300 'followers' on Facebook!!!