

Palm Island Voice



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Issue 458

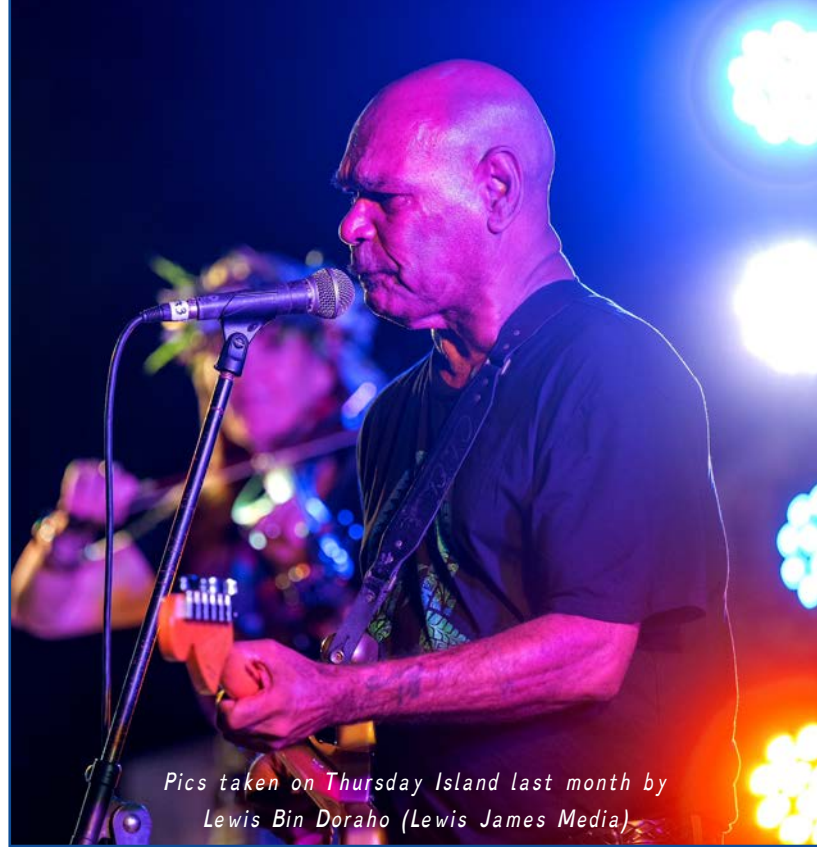
THURSDAY 1 October 2026



ABORIGINAL SHIRE COUNCIL

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

From Rations to Wages to Treaty – Joe Geia brings historic national tour to Palm Island



Pics taken on Thursday Island last month by Lewis Bin Doraho (Lewis James Media)

Joe Geia is celebrating more than four decades of song writing, performance and social activism with a national tour – including a gig on Palm Island later this month – to launch his latest recording, ‘Sing for the Black’, a double-vinyl album of the songs that make up his “*From Rations to Wages to Treaty*” musical narrative. *Continues next page...*



Joe brings tour to Palm

...from page 1

Joe said his lived experience was inextricably linked to his songs and stories.

He said *'From Rations to Wages to Treaty'* tracked the experiences of First Nations people in Australia over three historical eras, sung in chronological order from pre-colonisation up to the present day with the ongoing struggle for Treaty.

He said the rations era went back to the Palm Island strike in 1957.

"It was a ration era when they fought against rations," he said. "Then there's wages, that's another era where they started working for money, but like the book says, 'Lousy Little Sixpence'. So they were working for sixpence. And then there was a big 'no' for the referendum, but Treaty was successful in some of the places in Australia.

"So I looked at those three eras as Rations to Wages to Treaty."

He said his original performance took an hour and a half and had footage of each era showing on a screen in the background.

"Everybody knows Uncle Willie, but not every one knows it's Willie Thaiday," he said.

"So I got footage of his family and the siblings because he wrote the book *'Under the Act – Protected'*, which takes us back to the 1957 strike.

"There was another song called *'Kawanji'*, that I wrote about Pastor Donald Brady, who was a pastor, but he was moved out of the ministry of his political beliefs.

"He was our Martin Luther King.

"He was involved in and lived in that rations era, and our 1970s land rights movement.

"Once the act was abolished, then there was resistance and people who were taken away wanted to go back to where they originally came to refresh in their minds about who was related to who and all that information."

He said the goal of the tour overall was to "end up with something" – a book, a PhD and a documentary, he hoped.

"I have had many highlights and many lows in my four-decades-plus career," he said.

"I often think, not bad for a Black kid born under the Act in a tin barracks in the middle of a North Queensland cane field."

As the writer of renowned songs such as *'Yil Lull'* and *'Uncle Willie'*, Joe Geia's contribution to the arts has been significant and enduring.



Joe & Lyn Geia on Thursday Island last month. Pic by Lewis Bin Doraho (Lewis James Media)

Joe's new album includes a 20-page booklet with lyrics and the stories behind the songs.

The Sing for the Black Tour will present concerts in major capital city and regional venues in Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria and has already included some of the most meaningful locations connected to Joe's history, including Hope Vale and Thursday Island.

He said he was excited to be playing on Palm Island on Friday 16 October.



Rangers build skills in their care for Country

Palm Island's own MinggaMingga Rangers are working to build their skills and take advantage of these cooler months to manage their Country and build their capacity.

The Ranger group is managed by Manbarra Operations Ltd under the Manbarra Elders Counsel.

Ranger Coordinator Richard Cassady said it was important to take on fire management at this time of year, including cool burning, as seasonal conditions allowed.

“During the cooler months, when conditions are suitable, the Rangers undertake cool burning and fire management activities on Palm Island,” he said.

“Working at the right time and in the right conditions helps manage fuel loads and care for healthy Country, while providing opportunities for Rangers to strengthen practical

skills and knowledge.

“For us, caring for Country is guided by the seasons.

“As conditions change throughout the year, so does the work, from fire and weed management on land to monitoring waterways, marine environments, wildlife and culturally important places across Manbarra Land and Sea Country.”

Capability, Governance & Strategic Partnerships advisor for Manbarra Operations Ltd Ursula Kohler said outside of their fieldwork, the rangers were working hard on the inside.

“Rangers continue to participate in training and knowledge-sharing

opportunities, bringing together cultural knowledge, contemporary land and sea management practices, technology and practical experience,” she said.

“At the heart of the program is a commitment to growing the capability of local Rangers and ensuring knowledge continues to be shared across generations.”

They said it was all about doing the right work in the right season and caring for Country together.

Follow the MinggaMingga Rangers on Facebook to see more of their work, training and time spent caring for Country.





Tahlulah celebrates attendance progress

Try for 5! is helping Palm Island students build positive attendance habits and engage more deeply in school, with support from Waratah Education Foundation enabling the program to continue encouraging their progress.

A recent Cowboys Community Foundation visit to Palm Island celebrated the students, families and educators at St Michael's Catholic School and Bwgcolman Community School who were contributing to improved attendance across both schools.

Both schools recorded whole-school attendance improvements during the first half of 2026, led by an increase of more than 10 percentage points at St Michael's Catholic School compared with its 2025 average. Bwgcolman Community School also recorded progress across its primary and secondary cohorts.

Beyond the figures, educators have reported stronger student motivation, classroom engagement and participation, while Try for 5!-led celebrations have helped build positive recognition around attendance.

Cowboys Ambassador Tahlulah Tillett said the visit provided

an opportunity to recognise the commitment behind these results.

"Every day at school gives students another chance to connect and work towards their goals," Ms Tillett said. "It was special to celebrate the progress students have made and see the ownership they take in attendance. Through Try for 5! and the support of Waratah Education Foundation, we're encouraging them to recognise their own progress, support their classmates

and celebrate what they can achieve together."

St Michael's Year 5 Teacher, Eldon Bizaare, said students had embraced the opportunity to work towards their attendance goals.

Bwgcolman Community School Deputy Principal, Jo Tanzer, said the initiative had created a welcoming opportunity for students to connect with Try for 5! role models and engage with positive learning experiences.



Water journey successes travel far & wide

Palm Island Council's experience in delivering water and sewerage services has been shared with other Indigenous Councils at several industry forums focused on safe and healthy drinking water outcomes.

The presentations were an opportunity to discuss some of the unique operational and infrastructure challenges faced by remote island communities, as well as the importance of building local workforce capability to support essential services.

PIASC Department of Works & Facilities Water & Sewerage Manager Micah Geia said he had taken that message to several forums including the Indigenous Local Government Safe & Healthy Drinking Water Symposium in Townsville, where he received the Best Presentation Award, the 2026 Voices from the Bush Conference, an Operational Staff Conference in Melbourne and a Water Supply Regulation Workshop in Townsville.

"This was an opportunity to take the story of Palm Island, our local workforce and what our community is capable of achieving to wider industry audiences," he said.

"They demonstrate what is possible when First Nations people are given genuine opportunities to build expertise, lead essential services and deliver solutions for their own communities."

Mayor Alf Lacey said Micah and his team should be proud of their contribution.

"Behind every essential service is a team of people

working to keep it operating for the benefit of our community," Mayor Lacey said.

"We are proud of the efforts of our staff and their willingness to learn, develop new skills and take on increasingly complex responsibilities.

"Their commitment is helping Council build stronger services for the future."

CEO Emma Bradbury said the opportunities reflected the efforts of Micah, his team and many people across Council.

"The delivery of water and sewerage services on Palm Island is very much a team effort," she said.

"Our staff work hard every day under challenging circumstances to operate and maintain critical community infrastructure.

"While we know there is still significant work ahead of us, we are grateful to acknowledge the commitment of the local workforce and the contribution they make to our community."

She said Council worked closely with regulators, government agencies and industry partners to strengthen its systems, improve operational practices and address long-standing infrastructure challenges.

"Like many remote councils, we are on a journey of continuous improvement," she said.

"We recognise there are areas where further investment and development are required, and we appreciate the support being provided by our regulators and industry partners as we continue that work."

Council congratulates Micah for his hard work and award winning presentations at the various forums. Too Deadly, Micah!





Jorja James helps Queensland bring home gold

Young Bwgcolman woman Jorja James represented Queensland at the Under 23 National Indigenous Netball Championships in Melbourne earlier this month.

Jorja grew up in Townsville with her parents, Kelly and Lisa, and her sister, Kelyse, and has strong family connections to Palm Island.

A talented Goal Attack and Goal Shooter, Jorja has played through Townsville City Netball and represented the NQ Steelers, competing against teams from across North Queensland.

After earning her place in the Queensland squad through trials in Brisbane, Jorja helped Queensland put together a strong championship campaign.

Queensland's only round-robin loss came against Western Australia – the same team they would meet again in the gold medal match.

In a thrilling grand final that came down to the final seconds, Queensland fought back to defeat

Western Australia 36–35, claiming the national title by just one point.

Jorja's dad, Kelly, travelled to Melbourne to support her and kept family back on Palm Island updated throughout the championships.

It is wonderful to see another young Bwgcolman athlete taking her talent

to the national stage and achieving success.

Well done, Jorja and the Queensland Under 23 team on bringing home the gold!

Words and pics thanks to Murielle Walsh.





The mighty BARRACUDAS U10s side played in the Gorden Tallis Cup last week. These kids are too deadly, and thankful for ongoing support from the Bwgaman Aboriginal Land Trust Youth Project, League Safe and FAO. The kids also had good support from their parents at the event, who were all keen to be there for the next superstars of the PIJRL. Thanks also to Coach Jioji Dabea and thanks Manager Emele Melo Radinitoga – it's always awesome to see such community spirit.

CHAMPIONS!



U14 Boys played the Tom Tassel Cup in Cairns earlier this month with two Palm Islanders – Raoul Miller Jnr and Anukie Miller – somewhat standing out from the crowd and becoming the ‘talk of the carnival’.

Player of the Grand Final Raoul Miller Jr scored 10 tries, and Anukie Miller scored eight tries over the weekend.

“The boys have been playing for Western Lions this year,” Western Lions Pride U14 team manager Charlotte Jessen said.

“It’s been an absolute pleasure having the boys in our team, they both have so much talent.”

Well done Raoul and Anukie!

Pics by Western Lions Pride U14 team manager Charlotte Jessen.

Council secures new Townsville office

Palm Island Council is proud to announce a new mainland office opening this week in Aitkenvale, offering a modern, accessible and welcoming space for staff, Community and elected members.

For many years, Council's mainland offices were not easily accessible to Community members and did not support Council's growing operations.

The new office marks a significant step forward, offering accessible meeting rooms, dedicated training facilities and modern workspaces designed to better serve the Palm Island community.

Mayor Alf Lacey said the new office reflected Council's commitment to ensuring Community had a welcoming place to connect with Council when visiting Townsville.

"For a long time our Community didn't have a mainland office that was truly accessible or designed to

meet our needs," Mayor Lacey said.

"Now we have a modern, welcoming space where Community can meet with Council staff, attend training, participate in meetings and feel connected to their Council, even when they're off the Island. I genuinely like visiting the new office and encourage Community to drop in, say hello, and make use of this fantastic facility when they're in Townsville. It's something we can all be proud of."

Mayor Lacey acknowledged Council staff and leadership behind the project.

"I want to congratulate our staff especially, CEO Emma Bradbury, for their work in securing these premises and creating this space – the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive," he said.

Emma said the new office brought Council into line with arrangements adopted by remote and island councils across Queensland.



"As Council continues to grow its programs, projects and services, it is essential that we provide contemporary, fit-for-purpose facilities that support our corporate operations and create opportunities for collaboration, training and professional development," she said.

"Many mainland-based councils take these facilities for granted, but for a remote island local government, having a professional mainland presence is critical to supporting staff, engaging with stakeholders and improving service delivery outcomes for our Community."

Council looks forward to welcoming Community members, partners and stakeholders to the new office in the coming months.

Community vet clinic

Monday 12 & 26 October

Free dog and cat desexing is available.

Contact Council's Reception to add your name to the booking list.

THE NEXT *Palm Island Voice* DEADLINE*

(Issue 459*) will be Monday 12 October

for publication by Thursday 15 October



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 3500 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 more than 8000 'followers' on Facebook!!!