

Waaanta

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2012

Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council

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Happy faces were all the go throughout the Lockhart River Culture and Entertainment weekend held late in September.

Opening the Community Hall was postponed to the 10th and 11th of October when the touch and softball competition with other communities is due to happen.

In the meantime everyone was invited to go to a Friday night disco followed up by community BBQ and other entertainment the next day.

Activities opened with slip and slide jumping castle, face painting, Mums & Bubs fashion parade and an art display which included old

photos. Then everyone joined in to prepare a BBQ lunch time feast.

Evening events included Mary G, a workshop rendition of Michael Jackson's Thriller performed by some of our youth, local dancers and a video produced by David about the transition from old Lockhart to New Lockhart.

The weekend was a great success with parents and children interacting very positively and many happy faces.

Words & pics by LRASC Youth Worker Ray Genn





A word from...

Mayor Wayne Butcher

Firstly I would like to pass on my condolences on behalf of the Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council to all the families in Lockhart River Community for the passing of our late loved ones.

I know it has been a difficult time for the Community as a whole, and also a sad time.

I especially want to thank the late Councillor Abraham Walter "Blade" Omeenyo for his contribution to the LRASC in the short time he was involved.

He will be a great lost to the Council and Community, we had great plans for re-building Cultural Programs and re-generating respect for our elders.

I worked with the old fella all my life; he mentored me in culture and on country and his knowledge of our culture will be greatly missed, especially at the next Laura Dance Festival.

I also want to welcome the appointment of our new Councillor Josiah Omeenyo who has replaced the old fella.

Cr Josiah (*pictured below with CEO Peter Opiotim*) will take up the portfolios of Elders, Culture, Language and Dance. His record of involvement in cultural activities over the years speaks for itself.

I want to encourage the Community to support Cr Josiah in his efforts to do his best for us all.

CHALLENGES: Community Empowerment

Our people in the Lockhart River Community have great potential, and we need to explore these potentials and turn them into opportunities.

We need to tackle some of our weakness and challenges together and head on, be prepared to make hard decisions and willing to create positive change. Changes won't happen overnight, but positive changes will create positive attitudes – united we stand divided we fall.

The Community needs good strong leadership in many areas: education, health, youth, etc.

We need Community people to stand up and take on leadership roles in our Community. People with good knowledge and understanding of their specific interest area need to get involved and participate in decision making.

The more people who take on leadership roles and responsibilities, the more that will ensure 'people empowerment' which leads to 'community empowerment'.





Pic: L-R: CEO Peter Opio-Otim, Cr Josiah Omeeny, Cr Wayne Butcher, Cr Veronica Piva, Cr Paul Piva, Cr Norman Bally, Finance & Admin Manager Stanley Mugwiria

CHALLENGES: Education for our future

A good example of where we should be leading is in our children’s’ education.

We need to ensure that every child in this Community is given fair go at getting educated.

Our children are the next generation of leaders, for them to have a chance to get good quality education, the Community must work together.

In unity our Community needs to support our children and their parents.

Together the Community must take on the challenge of developing strategies to ensure our children have an educated future.

Without proper education a child’s choices later in life becomes very limited, lack of basic reading and writing skills will restrain them from getting proper qualifications (carpenters, mechanics, lawyers, accountant, etc – all important building blocks to the future of our Community).

We need educated young people to develop into good leaders!

The Council along with the Lockhart River Police, school and Justice Group have been working together to develop a Lockhart River Community Education Strategy.

Our main focus will be truancy (attendance) to both primary and secondary schools.

Currently the attendance rate in Lockhart River school is 68%.

Our goal is to increase the attendance to 90%.

We are asking the children, their parents and family members and the Community to support and assist in our challenge to increase the attendance rate of each and every child.

Our presence and appearance in the Community will be more evident (we will be visiting homes to talk to parents and family members) about any child who is not attending school on a regular basis.

So parents, please encourage your child to attend school every day.

If you have difficulties or you need support, please let the school know.

A child with no or limited education is a child with very limited hope to succeed in life!

Wayne Butcher

Mayor

Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council

Introducing Cr Josiah Connell Omeeny...

I joined the Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council on Tuesday, the 21st of August 2012 when I was sworn into office (see pic on facing page).

My portfolios are in the areas of Arts, Culture, Elders, Men’s Group, Land and Sea.

I’d like to see more jobs for our young people.

My advice to the young people is if there are opportunities please, young people, grab them; don’t wait for the last minute.

You should not let any opportunities go past.

This includes opportunities for training.

If you want to contact me or want to discuss any matters in regards to my portfolio please contact me on 4060 7144, I’ll just be too happy to discuss any matters with you.





Community Development Team



Community Development Team Director Dottie Hobson says the Lockhart River Kuwadji Wimpa Dancers have been working hard since they won the 2011 Laura Dance & Cultural Festival competition...



Corporate Services

Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council's Department of Finance and Administration has experienced a massive workload over the past six months, leading up to the end of the 2011/12 financial year in particular, writes Finance and Administration Manager Stanley Mugwiria...

Finance Team members have been involved in the preparation of financial statements as well as budgeting for the forthcoming financial year over 2012/13.

Achievements have included completion of Draft Financial Statements on time and ready for the audit. As a result our final audit visit has been scheduled for early October.

Everything is now on-target to have our audited financial report finalised by the 30 November deadline.

Council's budget meeting was held in the Cairns Office in August and was very successful.

The 2012/13 budget was reviewed and approved along with our Capital, Operating Revenue and Expenditure budgets.

Council has every expectation we will break even over the forthcoming financial year.

Recently Council underwent some restructuring, adding Library and Radio services to the Finance &

Administration Department. Our IT Officer, Joseph, is ready and willing to undertake additional responsibilities in supervising these new functions.

I wish to welcome everybody into the new financial year with a reminder to all our line managers/coordinators/supervisors that they should not hesitate to contact me for assistance regarding their financial and/or budget reports and requirements.



...“We were invited to go to Palm, and they went to Mornington Island,” Ms Hobson said.

“Hopefully, we’ll win the next Laura because they’ve all been preparing to go to that already.

“There’s a lot of practising, we work very well with the kids.”

She said she also worked on a Sports Day and children’s activities for the school holidays late in September.

“I’m working with Ray, our new Youth Worker, and all my Community Development mob.

“For the Youth Centre, we’ve got a lot of things going on there and another new worker, Willy Clarke, the Justice Group Co-ordinator, and then we’ve got our Family Together worker Tanya Koko.

“We’ve got two people at Puuya Centre and at the HACCS there’s Ivy and her three girls delivering food for our elders from their newly renovated building.

“For the Men’s Group we’ve just got young Patrick Butcher Jnr on board as our new Co-ordinator.

“Hopefully we’ll get a safe house soon for the kids as well.”

Between the Library and the radio she said there was also Margaret Hobson and Emily Pascoe working with Kate Adams in Community Development.



*Previous Page Above:
Dottie and her Mum Rene
at the Cairns Indigenous
Arts Fair*

*This Page: Top Left: Men’s
Group Coordinator Patrick
Butcher and Youth Worker
Ray Genn;*

*Top Right: HACCS
Supervisor Ivy Hobson;
Right: Kuwadjji Wimpas
Dancers on Palm Island*

*after their Laura win
(pic courtesy
Alf Wilson).*



Vale Abraham (Blade) Omeenyo

8/8/57 - 6/8/12

Abraham Blade Walter Omeenyo was born on Thursday Island on 8 August 1957.

He was the youngest son of Pagai Omeenyo, nee Sailor, and Charlie Omeenyo (both deceased). He was one of seven children.

As a child at Lockhart Old Site, Blade grew up learning and understanding his culture. He developed a clear understanding of cultural law and obligation, and identified himself with his father's Umpila people. He learnt the customary ways of his ocean travelling ancestors and was a proficient hunter.

As a young teenager, he moved with his family to Umagico and was cared for by his second eldest brother Mick, and Evelyn Omeenyo.

It was during his time at Umagico and TI that Blade got to know his mother's people who he stayed close to for his entire life.

After secondary school Blade moved back to Lockhart and commenced his working life. He loved to work and always had paid jobs as well as contributing to community life including Men's Group, Justice Group, supporting his Umpila mob in their fight for their traditional lands as well as encouraging and growing the traditional dance team here.

In 1984 he married his wife Dorothy Hobson at the St James

Church in Lockhart, and raised their three children. Then in 1987 he became the first Indigenous Council Clerk, which is now known as Council CEO.

He had the leadership to bring people together from different clan groups to support community initiatives and demonstrated he was always comfortable to place the interests of others before his own.

Early this year he was elected to the Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council, a position he had not held for many years.

He was offered the portfolio of Culture, Elders, Men's Group and dancing.

This seemed to give the old fella an extra burst of energy. He was excited to phone his closest friends to tell them the news of his election and mentioned how well he thought his Council would work together.

Blade would often say, "I am a culture man. Without culture we have nothing".

And so, it was his love and respect for culture and dance that will always be remembered.

He never would let his people forget about culture and worked for many years to highlight the importance of land management and culture.

He always encouraged the young people of Lockhart to be

proud of their culture and to get involved to sing and dance the stories of Lockhart.

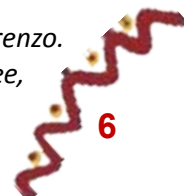
He led the dance team to many festivals. Nothing gave him more pride and satisfaction than to see children, teenagers and adults at dance practice and talk about stories and make new dances for them. He took dancing and singing very seriously and felt a cultural obligation to keep it alive and well.

In the last 18 months Blade embarked on another vision of getting a dance group incorporated. He was successful in doing this and he was elected as the Chairman of the Lockhart River Kuwadjji Wimpa Dancers. Blade said he had never been prouder when his team came back to perform for the community last year with the Laura Dance Shield firmly in their hands.

Late on Monday afternoon 6 August 2012, Blade was organising an upcoming performance with his dance team. He took severe chest pains, collapsed and died within an hour.

The Omeenyo family wishes to thank all those who have provided support to us this week. We also thank everybody for their attendance and letters of condolence.

Blade leaves behind his brother Lawrence, sister Rita, children Richard, Deanka, Grant and grandson Lorenzo. His Umpila Clan's: Brown, Captain, Clarmont, Giblet, Matty, Rocky, Sandy, Tongaii, Thompson, Tucandidgee, Warradoo families also the Creek family, Mundraby family. Mother side family: Tribal Clan – Samsep Sailor Family (Seagull): Sam, Pensio, Cook, Rueban, David, Gela, Hanson, Singapore.



A cultural man who will be 'greatly missed'

Abraham 'Blade' Omeenyo's contribution to the Lockhart River will be keenly missed across the community by everyone from the Dancers to the schools to the Council.

Letters of condolence have come from far and wide and include the thoughts of Minister for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs Glen Elmes.

Minister Elmes said he was greatly saddened to hear of the community's loss.

"Everyone who has known Cr Omeenyo came to appreciate his commitment and faithful service to the people of Lockhart River," he said.

He said while his working life had been much-admired "he has also been respected as a proud Umpila man who always pursued his passion for his culture, the preservation of traditional knowledge, language and his traditional lands, including teaching the next generation in traditional matters".

"As a Trustee of both the Mangkuma and Kull land trusts he was known as a man of strength, courage and commitment," he said.

In a letter from the Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council, Cr Blade was identified as a "person

of impeccable quality".

"In whatever role he played, he exhibited nothing but the finest qualities of a leader," the letter said.

"His journey in the employment career provides us with a good road map of a person who served the community in various areas.

"He was a teacher aide, he was a 'public servant' and he was loyal, dedicated and result-oriented Council employee: rising to the level of Deputy Council Clerk in the late 1980s when notions and concepts of community council and self-management were in the early stages of formation.

"It is in the area of culture that the late Councillor excelled in every way.

"He was one of the founding fathers of the Traditional Owner organisation in Lockhart River.

"He dedicated his time to envisioning that the culture of Lockhart remains alive.

"He played an active role in transmitting cultural values to young people at the school and in other major cultural events including the Laura Festival.

"At the time of his passing he was busy organising and training the Lockhart River Kuwadji Wimpa Dancers to take part in the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair.

"Sadly he was not to be physically present at the event, but the work he did was demonstrated at CIAF.

"He died during what he loved, ensuring that the cultural oxygen continues to flow.

"This distinguished father, grandfather, elder, administrator, cultural leader ended his light as a Councillor in Local Government - the fabric that keeps the community together.

"He kept us together.

"His contribution at the Council meetings will be greatly missed."



Dancers success at Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

Kuwadji Wimpa Dancers' success at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair "caught us by surprise" Community Development Director Dottie Hobson said.

"It was very successful) which kind of caught us by surprise," Community Development Director Dottie Hobson said.

She said Blade's presence at the Fair was missed.

"He got the Dancers incorporated before we set out to come down this way," she said. "It was a sad thing, he was involved from the start to get all this mob ready to come down. And then, I think it was a week before we got here, he had a heart attack. We put him to rest and then we came down on

the Monday. And it turned out to be a real good thing, so he would have wanted it that way."

Cr Josiah Omeenyo said there was a number of people they needed to thank for getting them there.

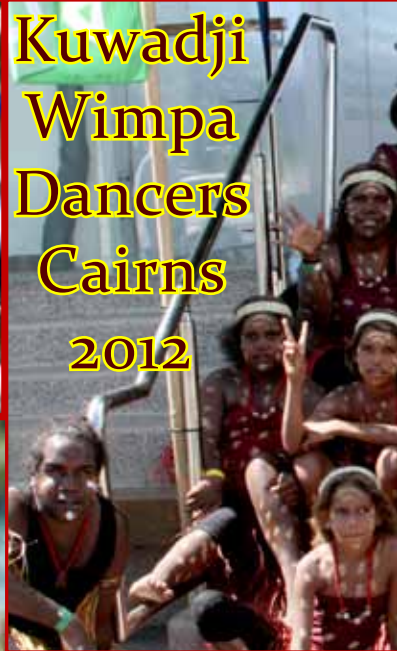
"I'd like to say a big thank you to Skytrans for their sponsor of \$16,000 to allow a Lockhart dance team to participate at the Cairns Arts Festival," he said. "Another thank you goes to the Dancers themselves for putting up an excellent show during CIAF. A big thank you goes to Uncle

Leffy, Father Brian, Community Development Team, the Principal and Deputy of State School, the entire community of Lockhart River and last, but not least, the Council for their support. As winners of the Lockhart Festival Shield in 2011 we need to begin practising for the festival to be held in 2013. I appeal to all dancers and their family members to get involved with the preparation.

"In participating in this event we keep our culture alive."



Kuwadji
Wimpa
Dancers
Cairns
2012







Engineering Services



Black and More are a Cairns-based engineering company with extensive experience in delivering infrastructure projects in remote indigenous communities throughout Queensland.

They have recently been engaged by Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council to assist them with engineering matters and delivery of key projects for the Lockhart River Community.

Black & More have already successfully delivered a number of projects in Lockhart River including:

- Renovations to the Land and Sea Building;
- Renovations of the Community Hall;
- Construction of the new Mens Centre; and,
- Construction of a new two-bedroom house on Blady Grass Street.

Black & More are currently assisting Council with the delivery of:

- New Council Store;
- Lockhart River Lighting upgrade;
- NDRRA Road Restoration Works;
- Quintell Beach Development;
- Iron Range Airstrip Maintenance; and,
- Any other project requiring special engineering advice or project management.

Jobfind CDEP Building Project – Renovations to the Land & Sea Building

Renovations on the old Land and Sea Building have been completed by Gateway Constructions, who carried out works over a period of 14 weeks and employed several local CDEP workers along the way.

Landscaping works on the exterior of the building have been carried out by local CDEP employees.

The building will be used by Jobfind to deliver CDEP and Job Services to the Lockhart River Community as well as providing upgraded training facilities for local job seekers.

These facilities will be used to deliver a variety of training course designed to provide skills and increase employment opportunities in Lockhart River.

A full commercial training kitchen was also constructed as part of the refurbishment to provide further training opportunities for the local community which may lead to full-time employment within the industry.

Jobfind CDEP Building Project – Lockhart River (Land & Sea Building)

Before



After



Before



After



Lockhart River Council Store Upgrade

Concept designs have been prepared for the upgrade of the Lockhart River Council store to provide storage and delivery facilities.

The site was surveyed prior to concept plans being prepared for approval by Council.

Tenders for the works are to be called prior to the end of the year, with construction works likely to commence on site in early 2013 at the conclusion of the wet season.



Lockhart River Lighting Upgrade

Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council has liaised with Ergon Energy regarding the installation of street lighting in the community.

Ergon Energy carried out checks to ensure there were no environmental or cultural heritage issues in the area of the work.

The project is programmed for completion by March 2013.

Iron Range Airstrip Maintenance
An engineering inspection has been undertaken on the Iron Range Airstrip and a scoping study report for the airstrip pavement was finalised and reviewed.

Council authorities were considering the finding of the report and further information regarding this project will be provided in the near future.





Lockhart River NDRRA Works



Emergent works on the Lockhart River Road network have also recently been completed.

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) provide funding to carry out these works which were required to ensure major damage to the road network was rectified in order to make the roads safe.

This was challenging given the extended wet season in 2011/2012.

Works were carried out by Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council in partnership with local contractors.

These partnerships were highly successful in delivering high quality works and up-skilling members of the local community.

Additional rectification works are still required on many of the Lockhart River roads and it is expected that these will commence in the coming months pending approval from QRA.



Quintell Beach Development

Design of the new campsite at Quintell Beach began after funding was allocated for the project, managed by Council engineers Black & More.

The proposed campsite development represents one component in an overall capital improvement campaign for Quintell Beach it was hoped will include the creation of parks and gardens, landscaping and beautification, and improvements to the barge operational area.

Phase 1 of the works involves the construction of a new camp ground consisting of toilets block, BBQ facilities and camping facilities.

The facilities will be designed to attract visitors and tourists to the local area who may have otherwise bypassed Lockhart River.

Ultimately the camp ground will also provide employment opportunities for local community members.

Council considered two concepts for the camp ground, one to locate it immediately to the north of the existing barge ramp and the other to locate it to the south of the barge ramp.

Construction works were likely to commence on site in early 2013 at the conclusion of the wet season.



Words on these pages were from Black & More Partner/Principal Project Manager, Greg O'Brien.

Greg is the Partner responsible for the Project Management Division of Black & More. With more than 20 years experience, he is an expert in the management of civil projects including water, sewerage, roads, drainage and storm water. He is a Member of the Institution of Engineers Australia and the Australian Institute of Project Management.



Cairns Cape York Cannabis Project

In 2009 the Lockhart River council invited James Cook University (JCU) to conduct cannabis (Gunja) surveys in their community.

The surveys were completed in 2011 and the final results show that about ½ the people in Lockhart River community (age 15-50) have smoked cannabis (some only once).

More men than women have smoked it and these men tend to smoke it more heavily.

Many young men smoke it every day, and 'stress-out' a lot when it is hard to get.

JCU reported this information to council and community members and many people were worried that cannabis use was impacting the community in a bad way.

They worried that everyday exposure may influence kids to think that all adults smoke cannabis, and the kids might start smoking it.

They worried that when people are 'stoned', they don't look after their kids properly, or take other responsibilities seriously, like their job.

They worried that cannabis smoking can affect the lungs and brain, and can lead to mental illness, such as psychosis and schizophrenia.

They worried that if so many people are smoking gunja, then who is going to be the future leaders and workers in the community.

They worried that too much money



is being spent on gunja, and this money is leaving the community.

The council asked JCU if they could help with the cannabis issue.

So JCU formed a 'Cannabis working group', who try to drive strategies or actions to reduce cannabis use and the harms of cannabis use in Lockhart River.

Right now we are trying to combine this 'working group' with the Men's Group and the Women's Group, so people can discuss cannabis or other drugs within groups who meet regularly.

We are hoping the topic of 'cannabis' or 'other drugs' could be discussed once a month.

During the course of our study, JCU staff has talked to community organisations and community members about ways to help their kids, cousins, family members or other community members reduce their gunja use.

We talked to gunja users too about this. Most people agreed that helping each other was probably the best way.

JCU are now starting up a 'buddy' system utilises family and friends to support a gunja user to quit.

This is what it means to be a good 'buddy': Being a buddy means being a good friend, not growling your mate.



Being a buddy means hanging out with your mate and offering things to do other than smoking gunja.

Being a buddy will strengthen you as a person, as you take on the responsibility of helping a friend.

Being a buddy will make you a 'community role model', a 'community champion', who others will look up to.

Being a buddy will strengthen families and the whole community.

We are also offering 'quit packs' to gunja users and buddies to help with this. You can get a quit pack from CDEP or the Men's Group.

From the Cape York Cannabis Project team: Susan Jacups, Michelle Fitts, and Brett Walsh





Puuya laying education foundations

All the right people are talking about education in Lockhart River after an Education Learning Circle was initiated by the Puuya Foundation in Cairns earlier this year.

Puuya Foundation Chair Dottie Hobson said it was about stakeholders working in partnership with the Parent and Community Engagement Committee (PaCE) and the Lockhart River Council.

Representatives from the school, State and Australian government education departments attended.

"We have the right people from the community at the Learning Circle talking about education," Ms Hobson said.

"We talked and agreed on actions for the Puuya Foundation, the Council, the School and PaCE.

"It's good we are all working together on these challenges – our focus is improving education for our children."

Issues discussed included attendance, secondary schools, cultural induction for teachers as well as early years learning and parenting.

She said no-one wanted to duplicate what was already being done, but it was about building on what was already working, supporting new initiatives as they were needed and bringing the "right" partners together – old and new.

Puuya Foundation CEO Denise Hagan said it was about working together.

"We all know that we have to work together to co-create a better future for Lockhart children – no-one can achieve it alone," she said.

"The support of the Queensland and Australian governments, philanthropic and business partners are pivotal to the success of Education in Lockhart River."

Jim Varghese, Deputy Chair of the Puuya Foundation, and former Government Champion, facilitated the Learning Circle and said it was a great achievement.

"It's good to see so many of us still working together for Lockhart River after 10 years," he said.

"What a great achievement!" Cr Paul Piva, who has responsibility for the Council's Education Portfolio said work would be ongoing.

"We have some goals and have done some networking to improve education in Lockhart," he said. "We will get together again in a few months to check our actions."

The Puuya Foundation wanted to offer special thanks to Mayor Wayne Butcher, PaCE Chair Greg Pascoe and Principal John McSweeney for their focus on education and ongoing support of the Puuya Foundation.

"And thank you to all the participants of the Learning Circle for their hard work and commitment to action," Ms Hobson said.





TBS visit

Lockhart leaders (above) were recently invited to have a look at the services provided by the Cairns Benevolent Society Early Years Centre in Cairns.

Puuya Foundation board members along with representatives of Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council and the Parents and Community Engagement (PaCE) group met with Centre Manager Damien Knight and staff, at the state-of-the-art \$4.3 million early childhood service.

The TBS brings together everything families need, from kindergarten programs to parenting to family support and child health. All these services are integrated under the one roof, combining agencies and professionals working closely together for children, which makes it easier for families to access.

Everyone concerned understood the importance of improving early years learning and were keen to build on what works.

Getting involved early with babies and children to promote positive family experiences has been shown to increase the benefits for the child, improve the functioning of the family, and yield long-term gains for the whole community.

Mayor Wayne Butcher said

going to the Benevolent Society Early Years Centre was “a real eye opener”.

PaCE Chair Greg Pascoe said working with whole families was important.

“To give our kids a better chance we have to break the cycle of violence, mental illness and trauma – this Centre has the right idea by working with the whole family,” he said.



Early years learning and parenting was a priority identified by the Lockhart River Education Learning Circle led by the Puuya Foundation.

The Foundation has been in discussion with Australia’s oldest charity, TBS since 2011 about early childhood education and potential partnerships.

Puuya Foundation Director, Cr Veronica Piva said some 0-5-year-olds were missing out.

“We need to concentrate on these children to give them the best start in life,” she said. “They are our future.”

MP meeting

Members of the Puuya Foundation and Lockhart River leaders has met with Assistant Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs David Kempton in Cairns to share the Lockhart River story and encourage a new direction for government to promote independence, less government dependence, and encourage community business activity.

David Kempton said he was very interested in the work of the Puuya Foundation and suggested a meeting with Department of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs Director-General Debbie Best in the near future

to further discuss Lockhart River and opportunities for partnerships.

Lockhart leaders and Puuya Foundation Board members said they appreciated the opportunity to meet Mr Kempton and looked forward to working with him.

For more information contact Dottie Hobson in Lockhart River or Denise Hagan on 0419 681 025 or via denisehagan@puuyafoundation.com.au



Dancers perform for big crowds



Full story p 7
Full pic spread
pp 8-9



*Above: Welcome to new staff in Cairns!!!
Admin Assistant (temp)
Maureen Semei and
Revenue & Grants Officer
Denise McGregor*

Looking good...



**...thanks to
Council renos
& refurb...**

