



Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Inquiry into the Contribution of Sport to Indigenous Wellbeing and Mentoring



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WITH OUR
COMMUNITY**

The North Queensland Cowboys

Across all football codes, the North Queensland Cowboys is the only national team located in Northern Australia. As a 100% community owned club we take our responsibilities to the communities of North Queensland most seriously. With some 13.5% of our player group identifying as Indigenous Australians we take a very deliberate and proud interest in the impact we have on Indigenous communities and Indigenous young people across North Queensland and more broadly.

As a national sporting organisation, the North Queensland Cowboys have a number of significant community programs that aim to deliver tangible positive social outcomes across our vast region. We define ourselves and are seen in the community as not only being an NRL team, but also as having an obligation to contribute back to the community of which are a part - our ownership structure dictates that affecting positive social change and delivering real and measurable outcomes is an accountable part of our business model; our business tag line is "***In league with our community***". Following completion of a recent survey, our supporters agree that this motto is a good fit with our Club.

Our commitment to the communities and Indigenous people of North Queensland

Our North Queensland geographical footprint covers a wide range of communities, from the tip of Cape York, west to the Northern Territory border and south through to Rockhampton. Through this vast area, approximately 23% of the population are Indigenous (source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing, 2011, unpublished data*) and 7,608 are Indigenous aged between 15-19 years (source: Queensland Treasury, *Synthetically Estimated Indigenous ERPs*). Many of these Indigenous Australians live in remote communities outside of the major regional centres where access to education, health, employment and housing can be limited.

We know from our work over the years in these communities that many of their young people face very real barriers to an equitable future. These barriers are at the core of the gap that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians – barriers in education, literacy, numeracy and language (with English very often being their second language) and barriers in health, diet and in access to employment and further training just to name a few.

The North Queensland Cowboys is engaged in nine major programs contributing to the wellbeing of communities across the region including the *Cowboys Community Fund*, the *Adopt-a-School* program and our partnership with Bush Children's Health Scheme in Mount Isa to ensure its ongoing success and growth.

Our *Try Time!* program, conducted in high schools throughout the region, uses Cowboys players to engage students initially by participating in some sporting drills and then working with them on social factors that have been identified as having a negative impact on their education such as social media, cyber safety, bullying, negative body image, mental health and well-being and youth suicide. *Try Time!* was developed with schools and youth services in recognition that most learning barriers in high school stem from the many "social" impacts and pressures that young people face and the difficulty many in regional areas have in accessing youth support services. We partner with professional organisations such as *Head Space* and *Youth with a Mission* to deliver modules in the schools which discuss and address these issues in a safe, non-threatening and non-judgemental manner.

Of the Cowboys significant suite of youth and community programs, a number have a specific focus on delivering real outcomes for Indigenous boys and girls. In particular the *Cowboys Learn Earn Legend!* program, the *Obe Geia Challenge*, the *Every Day Counts* initiative, and *Dream, Believe, Achieve* programs all have a primary focus on achieving improved educational outcomes for indigenous young people in the region. Each of these programs is described in detail in Attachment A.

Our role in closing the gap

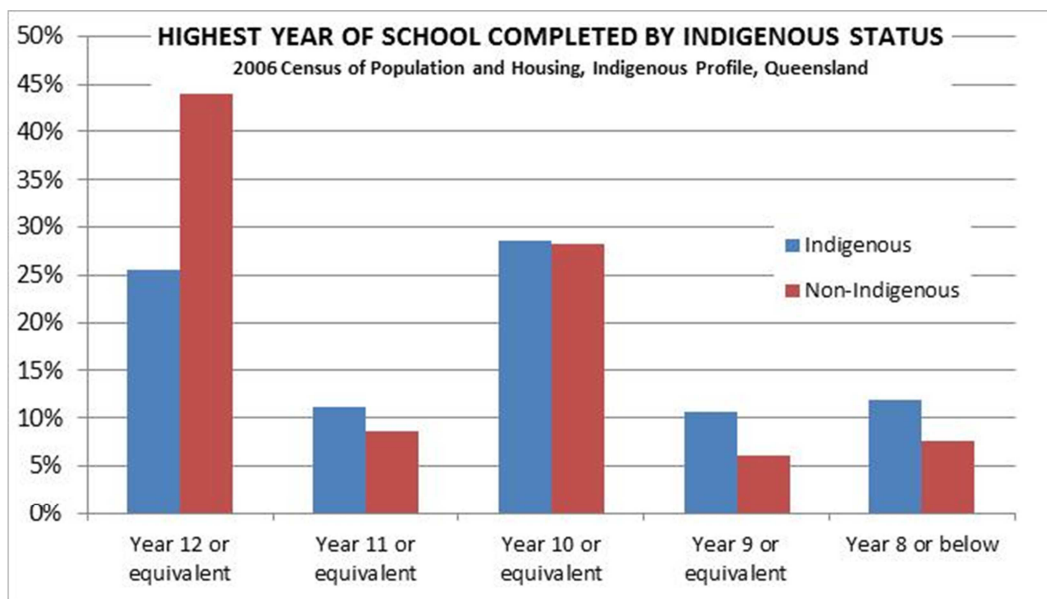
The relationship between educational attainment and unemployment well documents - those with a degree or a skilled vocation are approximately four times more likely to have a full-time job as a person who left school at age 15 or younger.

Indigenous young people are far more likely to drop out of school earlier than non-Indigenous youth. As shown in the table below, according to the 2006 Census, only 26% of Indigenous persons is Queensland



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aged 15 and over had completed year 12 or equivalent compared to 44% of non-Indigenous persons in the same cohort. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile – 111*).



The relationship between the gaps in educational attainment, in part illustrated above, and the future employment, health and even incarceration rates for Indigenous people are well documented – they are the very reason why three of the six 2008 Council Of Australian Governments (COAG) Closing the Gap targets are education related.

Moreover, it is for the same reason that we believe that our focus on young people in education is actively improving the lives of Indigenous Australians in the region and meaningfully helping to close the gap.

Engagement – the key to the Cowboy’s success

Central to all of our community programs and particularly those targeted to Indigenous young people is our strategies for, and success in, engaging the boys and girls we are targeting as well as their parents, schools and other community organisations that are important in their lives.

No matter whether the program has educational, health, sporting or other objectives, failure to engage the young people in the first instance will invariably lead to poor outcomes and unmet objectives.

In all of our community programs, we actively trade on the high profile that Rugby League has as the “sport of choice” in North Queensland and the high recognition factor of the Cowboys brand in particular to establish the interest of, and our relationship, with the young people we are aiming to engage. While the Club employs specialists to deliver our various programs, the active involvement and contributions of Indigenous legends and heroes like Johnathan Thurston and Matthew Bowen obviously also plays a critical role in engaging with Indigenous students and their families.

In all of our programs we aim to create a culture in which participants and their families are part of our team, working towards a common goal, as demonstrated in recent feedback we have received from the Executive Principal of Kirwan State High School:

“The “Every Day Counts” launch at Kirwan High on Wednesday July 25 was a wonderful community event and we would like to thank you most sincerely for your support and encouragement of this initiative.

We appreciate your commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students of our school, and the enthusiasm and openness you have brought to the project.



Your organisation of Johnathan Thurston and Matthew Bowen for the afternoon was a clear highlight for our students and families. The messages that they both delivered to our students were extremely powerful and affirming of what our school community is striving to do for its students."

Given that rugby league is by far the most viewed and spectated sport in Queensland (ABS, *Spectator Attendance at Sporting Events, 2009-10, 4174.0*) and the Cowboys are the only professional football club in North Queensland, we have a profile among young people that is second to none. A recent survey of our followers found that our supporter base is distributed fairly evenly between male and females, with 55% being male and 45% female. This is also represented through our programs, with them being attractive to both genders equally.

With national Indigenous icons such as Matthew Bowen and Johnathan Thurston on our player list we are uniquely placed to engage with indigenous young people in particular.

Delivering real outcomes

To gain a full and successful education, young people must obviously attend and participate in schooling, rather than just be enrolled – too many of our local schools have seen unacceptable levels of truancy and the poor individual and community outcome that this creates.

Successful engagement in education is additionally problematic for the many young Indigenous people living in remote communities in the region who need to relocate to major regional centres in order to attend high school. For these students there is a higher risk that they will suffer from homesickness and on returning to their community during school holidays, will then fail to return to complete their education. The importance of engaging family in supporting student's continuing in education is no more important than with this group and the Cowboys brand has been shown to play an important role in engaging with family members as well as students.

Examples of our programs' successes in working with schools in North Queensland and in offering incentives for students to attend school on a regular basis are detailed in Attachment A and include:

- The *Every Day Counts* initiative was recently implemented at a local High School. In total, there were 154 students who successfully completed the initiative and were able to celebrate with family and friends, as well as be commended for their achievement by Johnathan Thurston and Matthew Bowen at a dedicated function. Following this success, the initiative was introduced at Rasmussen State School, a local primary school that has a high number of Indigenous students and is situated in a recognised disadvantaged area of Townsville. The initiative required students to attend school at least 90% of the time over 20 days without unexplained absence. Of the 492 students, 97.9% successfully completed it. As a reward for the effort, Johnathan Thurston personally awarded students tickets to a home game.
- The *Obe Geia Challenge* program aims to reduce truancy levels in primary schools. The Challenge gives 12 local primary schools the opportunity to participate in a junior rugby league carnival held on Palm Island. The schools are generally from lower socio-economic areas, where attendance levels are low and truancy is generally high. Participation in the carnival is at no cost to the students, their family or their school and provides a real incentive for students to regularly attend school so that they can be selected to participate in the carnival. Schools have advised us that they have had students attendance rates improve drastically once the program has been implemented, as the incentive to attend a carnival on Palm Island is enticing for students.
- The *Learn Earn Legend!* program has to date achieved an 87% success rate for participants moving into further education, training or employment, of which 11.67% are studying at university – a result we are particularly proud of given that in most cases they are the first in their families to be able to pursue this career path.



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Recognising our effectiveness

The success of using the sport of rugby league as the tool of engagement is not only obvious through the programs we deliver but is evident across all NRL clubs. The Australian Rugby League Commission (ARLC), the governing body of the NRL, was named as the International Governing Body of the Year at the prestigious Beyond Sports Awards in London this year for its life changing health and education programs. Beyond Sport is a global organisation that promotes, develops and supports the use of sport to create positive social change across the world. This is an achievement we take considerable pride in as it recognises the special contribution Rugby League makes to people's lives. To be eligible for the award, an organisation has to make an effort that goes beyond addressing increased participation levels and focusses on major issues occurring within the relevant communities.

Closer to home, it is through our community programs that the North Queensland Cowboys is able to make a remarkable difference in our region. In particular, our Indigenous players take considerable pride in the work they do with Indigenous young people in the region - sharing with them how fortunate they are to have secured a professional career playing football, but also showing that they are still "one of the mob", proud of their heritage and culture and giving back to their communities.

Johnathan Thurston, our club co-captain and *Learn Earn Legend!* program ambassador, was recently quoted as saying "Hopefully I can use my profile to help these kids stay at school, learn and get a job. If something I say has that little bit of an impact on them, then I'm proud to be making a difference in their lives". Johnathan's efforts to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and his commitment to helping to improve outcomes for Indigenous girls and boys in our region have not gone unnoticed. He was recently named winner of the Ken Stephen Medal at the NRL One Community Awards in recognition of his outstanding contribution to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Through our *Learn Earn Legend!* program, we were this year able to provide the opportunity for eight Western Cape College students from the communities of Marpoon, Napranam and Weipa to travel to Townsville to attend a game at Dairy Farmers Stadium as a reward for their participation, attendance and efforts at school. At no cost to the students or their families, this trip included workshops at the Stadium, together with the opportunity to meet with players as an incentive to continue with their studies. Following this visit, it was apparent the influence our players have on the students – as one of them said:

"Johnathan is such a positive role model because he is able to relate to us and support us with our school work. I really look up to JT and think the most valuable piece of advice he gave me was to stay in school and try hard at everything I do. This is valuable for me because lots of students in Weipa don't finish school because they get distracted & influenced by negative peers."

As a Club, we are proud of what we achieve and how we inspire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to continue with their studies.

The effectiveness of using sport as a tool of engagement is not only apparent through the community programs that we deliver, but also through the number of requests we receive from Government departments, not-for-profit organisations and individuals to acknowledge and support their initiatives.

Making it happen and recommendations for the future

As we have demonstrated, the use of the Cowboys brand as a tool for the engagement of Indigenous young people is very powerful.

While we are fortunate to receive funding and sponsorship for a number of our programs, we also self-fund portions of all of our programs to fill the gaps in current funding provisions. In particular, it should be noted that the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEEWR) funding for the *Learn Earn Legend!* program covers year 12 and the first six months of post school education, employment or further training only and does not provide funding for year 11 students to participate.



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In our experience and that of our many community partners, many Indigenous students have disengaged from school well before the commencement of year 12 – in fact, it is generally the students that are motivated and committed to going somewhere that are still in school at this stage. As such, we are firmly of the belief that mentoring and support needs to be made available to these students earlier in their schooling. It is for this very reason that the Cowboys currently self-fund 141 such year 11 students to participate in the program.

In addition to recommending the extension of the *Learn Earn Legend!* program funding by DEEWR to year 11 students, we also believe that comparable funding programs are required to assist clubs like ours to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and girls much earlier – in fact, as early as primary school. It is vital that Government support programs such as ours that work at encouraging students early to make the choice to come to school. Primary school truancy leads to students missing fundamental learning that they struggle to catch up on, resulting in ongoing problems where they feel “stupid” amongst their peers due to the gaps in their learning, in turn leading to distracting behaviours, disengagement and truancy.

Education is the most effective tool in “closing the gap” but for it to be able to do so we have to be engaging boys and girls and their families as early as possible in their schooling. Proven approaches such as those described here which leverage the high recognition and profile of sporting stars and Clubs such as the Cowboys among young Indigenous people (and their families and communities) are demonstrably effective in gaining their attention in the first instance, and in then incentivising them to make the choice to come to school and participate to the best of their ability.

Finally, and again as demonstrated in our program successes, any initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for Indigenous young Australians needs to have a holistic approach that not only engages the young people themselves but also engages their family, communities and support networks.



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Attachment A: Program Specific Information

COWBOYS LEARN EARN LEGEND!

The *Cowboys Learn Earn Legend!* program assists Indigenous year 11 and 12 students during their final years of schooling and for the first six months of further education, training or employment. Our skilled program coordinators mentor participants to ensure they are on target to achieve their goals, and in some cases, work intensely with participants to put them back on the right track. By encouraging young Indigenous Australians to stay at school, get that job and be a legend for themselves, their family and their community, the program and the Cowboys are making a real difference in North Queensland's Indigenous communities.

Participation in the program is voluntary and in taking up the offer to participate, students must nominate some personal achievement goals to reach as part of the program. They are then recognised as a member of the Cowboys, which provides them with opportunity to interact with players at specific events. This use of the Cowboys brand is the tool of engagement that brings students to school and keeps them motivated to work towards achieving their career desires.

Learn Earn Legend! provides opportunities for participants to participate in work experience, school based traineeships and post placement mentoring. It also builds parental and community engagement, education and training sector and corporate commitment to assisting participants.

The extensive network of partner organisations that play a role in the success of *Learn Earn Legend!* is detailed below and we engage with each organisation on a regular basis to ensure everyone is aware of activities being conducted as part of the program and the role they can play to ensure the outcomes are achieved.

There are currently 267 boys and 230 girls from over 50 schools across our region actively participating in the program.

The Program is managed by a Steering Committee comprising representatives of the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; National Rugby League; Recruitment Outcomes Pty Ltd; Local Indigenous Elders; Kagara Ltd; The North Queensland Cowboys; and the Queensland Departments of Education and Training; Communities; and Employment, Economic Development and Innovation.

Program objectives

This program aims to improve educational and employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians, helping to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in these areas.

It aims to address five aspects of students' lives to successfully influence their employment and further education outcomes:

1. **School** – we provide mentoring to current year 11 and 12 students to improve Indigenous retention and achievement levels. We aim to make sure that students are better prepared for and supported in a career pathway beyond school. We have a partnership with each participant's school so they are aware of the program and its objectives and are supporting the participants with the same objectives in mind. This partnership effectively recognises realistic pathways for each participant and the school is able to provide support from an educational perspective.
2. **Parents and community** – we aim to support parents and community members to better engage with schools and support Indigenous students. Having a strong support network is imperative to enabling students to achieve their career goals. Culturally, family and community have a strong influence on participants and having them engaged and seeing value in the initiative increases the participant's chances for a positive outcome post secondary school.
3. **Higher education and training** – by partnering with University, TAFE and training providers in our region, we are able to illustrate to, and provide participants with, pathways to further education. James Cook University offers further education and career guidance, orientation, mentoring and research to support continuous improvement and analysis of program results. Our local TAFE campus offers training pathways, mentoring and training activities to our students, as well as staff involved in the program. There are many options of fully funded training placements for Indigenous youth which may alleviate a financial barrier for many of our participants. We provide the link between our participants and the most suitable training provider for the best possible outcome.



- 4. Employment** – we have engaged with a number of job agencies to support school leavers into employment and have enlisted our corporate and government partners to offer work experience opportunities in a diverse range of vocations, school based traineeships, full time traineeships and entry-level positions. We also provide education forums to these partners to assist them in supporting participants in their placements and in understanding the barriers that participants may experience. We provide ongoing support for the participant and the business during this transition period, which has proved essential to achieving a sustainable outcome. In work experience placements, we ask that the business provide a certificate/reference for the participant outlining the skills that they have attained and activities they were involved in for their resume.
- 5. Youth Services** – we have identified and engaged many of the youth service providers in the North Queensland region, gaining a sound understanding of their services that may be of assistance to our participants. Our skilled program coordinators have the ability to identify a participant's needs and be able to link them to a youth service provider and assist in ensuring there is no barrier to accessing the service they need. There is a diverse range of providers in youth services, many of which our participants are unaware of or do not have the confidence or ability to access.

Quarterly functions are held to engage with families and support networks. Having a reliable support network gives participants better opportunities to achieve their goals. These functions are held as a way to incorporate parents and family members into the program, and provide them with any information they may need to further assist their family member in achieving their career dreams.

Program funding

Funding for the *Learn Earn Legend!* program is received from the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the NRL. In specific recognition of the need to provide mentoring at an earlier stage in schooling, the Cowboys currently self-funds 140 year 11 students to participate in the program.

Program partners

To ensure the overall success of the program, we partner with a number of organisations:

- Education Queensland
- 50 School partners
- Catholic Education
- NRL
- James Cook University
- TAFE Qld
- Government and corporate partners
- Training provider and support organisations
- Employment agencies
- Youth support organisations

We also have relationships with a large number of corporate entities that provide us with opportunities for students to participate in work placements.

Program staff

We have a team dedicated to the overall success of this program. Our two full time program coordinators are the main point of contact for participants, their families, school and employers. The coordinators are trained in mentoring Indigenous young people, as well as having attended cultural awareness workshops (with one being qualified to deliver cultural awareness sessions).

The coordinators work very closely with school Career Education Councillors to ensure they are aware of any issues participants may be facing, and to address any needs that are present. They coordinate guest speakers to present to the participants on a range of relevant topics, including workplace etiquette, interview techniques and financial workshops and work towards giving students the opportunity to participate in work placements prior to finalising their desired career pathway.

The coordinators also work closely with our player group to arrange for players to visit participants to encourage or congratulate them on a particular achievement, speak about their childhood and the sacrifices



they had to make to achieve a good education and their chosen career pathways post football. Players are also utilized to reinforce key messages being delivered by coordinators.

Two Indigenous trainees, who were participants in the first year the program ran, support the program coordinators. Our trainees make regular visits to schools, as they are able to relate to what the students are currently going through and what is ahead of them. They are also of similar age and have faced many of the issues that are present for many students.

The program is overseen by our Community Relations Manager. This level of supervision ensures that no student is forgotten, with every participant given as many opportunities as possible to achieve their career aspirations and go on to make a positive contribution in the economy as well as their own community.

Program results

This program has been running since June 2011. As mentoring for our first student cohort of 180 participants draws to a close, we have realised an 87% success rate for participants moving into further education, training or employment.

Of these participants, 11.67% are studying at university – a result we are particularly proud of given that while Indigenous Australians make up 2.2% of the Australian working age population, Indigenous Australian students make up only 1.4% of all university students enrolled. Having this number of students transition into university from our first student cohort is a significant achievement - in most cases they are the first in their families to be able to pursue this career path, with many having to travel many hours from their home community to study.

The effect that the program has on participants and their schools can be seen in the following video:
http://www.cowboys.com.au/site/_content/Video/00016144-broadbandsource.mp4



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OBE GEIA CHALLENGE

The Cowboy's annual *Obe Geia Challenge* is a hugely popular junior rugby league carnival held on the remote Indigenous community of Palm Island with local and mainland teams of 15 players aged 10-12 years. It was developed by the Cowboys to bring together the mainland and Palm Island communities. It is named after former Cowboys player, Obe Geia, a Palm Island local, which helps to forge a strong connection with local juniors.

The carnival allows the Palm Island community the opportunity to showcase their destination and provide a full cultural experience for their visitors, including a welcome by elders, a traditional lunch and dance, and tours of the island. This provides great educational outcomes for mainland and local participants and fosters community engagement within the Palm Island community.

Program objectives

The Carnival aims to bring communities together and promote the benefits of sport, fitness and healthy living. Importantly, while the carnival addresses many community needs, it aims to reduce truancy within the eleven participating schools (12 teams participating), all of which are from lower socio-economic areas with high Indigenous populations and high truancy levels.

The participating schools implement guidelines for students to be able to participate in the Carnival – they have to maintain a high level of attendance, with no unexplained absences and good behaviour for the school year in order to be able to be selected to compete.

Program funding

The *Obe Geia Challenge* receives funding and sponsorship from the following

- NRL All Stars initiative
- Evolution Mining
- Palm Island Council
- Palm Island PCYC
- Cowboys Rugby League

Program partners

Without the support of partners, it would not be possible for this Carnival to occur and continue to be nil cost to participating students. The following organisations partner with us to make the event possible:

- Participating schools, with a large contribution received from teachers at the local schools on Palm Island
- Evolution Mining
- Palm Island PCYC
- Palm Island Council
- Australian Rugby League Development
- Ignatius Park College

Program staff

Our Community Relations department, together with representatives from our Junior Development and Sponsorship departments, resource this program.

We also call on the skills of the local teachers from Palm Island, who are familiar with the island culture to work with the local community to ensure the positive outcomes for everyone involved.

With one of the aims of the program to reduce truancy in schools, teachers in each school are heavily involved in the planning of the Carnival. They manage the team selection and student performance, as well as actively participate in the Carnival on the day.



Program results

All participating schools report that the prospect of participating in the Carnival has a positive effect on participants' schools attendance and behaviour. The broader benefits of the program are best illustrated by the following feedback from Heatley State School:

"... benefits included:

- 1. Because of the travel involved, ... my team are closer as friends – across multiple age groups. Other carnivals are for one specific age group and you don't generally have the travel. ... I genuinely feel it has made the bond among these players across year levels at my school better. It's something else these boys had to go through together and support each other through and it has made them closer!*
- 2. ... Having players at my school with families on the island talking to other players before coming over made looking forward to the day easy and generated a lot of interest. The positive day and sharing of culture/food etc as well as the island tour gave the players something really positive about the island to bring back and share with the community. We also reported to the school on assembly about the day and now we have a number of interested people who want to go on the trip next year.*

Overall the day was absolutely wonderful. I feel it was a very positive learning experience for the staff and players. I look forward with anticipation in hope of being invited to the 2012 Obe Geia Challenge. Thank you for the opportunity to enable Heatley to participate in such a fantastic day."



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EVERY DAY COUNTS

Following a number of meetings with the assistant Kirwan State High School principal regarding the increasing number of Indigenous students not attending school on a regular basis, we partnered with them to establish the *Every Day Counts* strategy.

Program objectives

The three-week initiative rewarded improved attendance by students with incentives such as inspiration visits to the school by Cowboys players, merchandise, game tickets and opportunities to visit the stadium and watch training sessions. Aaron Payne and Ray Thompson, former students of the school and current Cowboys players, launched the strategy and made promotional posters about the challenge to help motivate the students.

Along with their families, the 154 students who achieved the program's attendance goals celebrated their success on 25 July 2012 with a BBQ and presentation. Players, including Johnathan Thurston and Matthew Bowen, attended the special event at the school to recognise the achievements and reinforcing the importance of 'every day counts' to the students and their families.

Johnathan and Matthew spoke to the gathering, congratulating all involved and reminding families of the important role they play in encouraging their kids to come to school every day so that they have a good education and have all the life choices available to them at the conclusion of school. All successful participants received a certificate acknowledging their achievements. The high success rate again illustrated that the strategy of using sport as a platform to engage kids is one that is hugely successful in improving achievement outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Program funding

The program is self-funded by the North Queensland Cowboys.

Program partners

The North Queensland Cowboys partner directly with participating schools.

Program staff

The program is resourced by our Learn Earn Legend! Staff and senior players.

Program results

Through the success realized at Kirwan High School, we have also recently partnered with Rasmussen State School to improve their attendance levels, with all who successfully completed the program receiving tickets to the Cowboys v Knights home game.

The challenge required students to attend school at least 90% of the time over 20 days without unexplained absence. Of the 492 students, 97.9% successfully completed the challenge and received tickets to the game at a school assembly, presented by Johnathan Thurston.

Many of the other local schools have seen the success of the program, and many local primary and high schools are now using the same strategy.



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DREAM, BELIEVE, ACHIEVE

Using rugby league and music as tools of engagement, The North Queensland Cowboys' *Dream, Believe, Achieve* program is specifically targeted to young people with the aim of illustrating to them what they are capable of achieving with belief in themselves, peer support and the right support network.

The program's player mentors, together with the creative team at Muso Magic (See: <http://musomagic.com/>), engage young Indigenous participants and take them on an interactive journey that enables them to achieve a tangible outcome they would have never thought themselves able to achieve.

Dream, Believe, Achieve was developed following an approach to the Cowboys by the Palm Island CDEP to establish a three day off-Island program for a group of 15 young Palm Islanders aged between 17 and 21 years who were enrolled in the CDEP program. The participants had generally poor levels of engagement in training and employment, with some completely disengaged from the CDEP program.

The *Dream, Believe, Achieve* workshop was designed to re-engage the participants and assist in changing their self-belief, build their confidence and return to the island with a positive attitude towards improving themselves through their involvement in and commitment to the CDEP program. Through that improved involvement and commitment, the program aimed to give participants greater incentive to select real pathways to further training and employment.

Program objectives

Dream, Believe, Achieve is aimed at engaging Indigenous young people by using mediums that they are interested in (sport and music) and educating through these the realisation that they do have choices and with the right support networks, are able to apply these choices to their everyday lifestyle and through believing in themselves, they can achieve their dreams.

Program funding

The program is self-funded by the North Queensland Cowboys with assistance from the Coolgaree Aboriginal Corporation for CDEP who received funding from the federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

Program partners

The North Queensland Cowboys partnered directly with the Palm Island CDEP.

Program staff

The program is resourced by our Community Relations department staff and senior players with Muso Magic being contracted to deliver the music workshop component

Program results

The 15 young men who participated in the camp created and recorded their own song, "New Day Attitude" and as 'Boyz in the Shed', performed their song at the Cowboys' game, where they also debuted their music video to a stadium full of fans. The song also received airplay on Radio 4K1G and the program received considerable media coverage celebrating the outcomes achieved by participants.

Outcomes reported by the Palm Island CDEP staff include

- Improved awareness and confidence by each participant of what they able to achieve with support behind them.
- Improved engagement in the CDEP program and its outcomes.
- Improved leadership skills for participants.
- Improved ability to work as part of a team to achieve a common goal.
- A more positive perspective on self image and personal capabilities.
- Increased sense of ownership of what they are working to achieve.

