



MOVING FORWARD

A STUDENT AND LOCAL COMMISSIONER PORT

The Commissioners know that sometimes being a child, attending school and being well behaved can be difficult and that some children face problems that adults would struggle to cope with. Family relationships have a significant and influential impact on children attending school, and when attending, behaving appropriately whilst there. For some children, getting to school each morning is only the beginning of their daily struggle. For generations the Coen community has ensured that the education of their youth is a priority and are deservedly proud of an attendance rate comparable to the Queensland state average.

In recognition of the importance of schooling, the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy Coen campus awards ceremony was held on 3 December 2010. The awards are held to acknowledge those students and their families who have demonstrated a particular dedication to their education, either in academic results, or regular attendance. Following the official ceremony Mr Noel Pearson, Director of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, Mr Richie Ah Mat, Board Member of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership and Cape York Partnerships, Cape York Partnerships school Attendance Case Managers, Local Commissioners Peter Peter and Garry Port, teachers and parents were invited to the classroom to meet and speak with the students on a more personal level. During these discussions a student, stepped forward and asked if he may say a few words. This student thanked those present who had supported him through some rough times, making special mention of Local Commissioner Garry Port who at the time was a teacher-aide and groundsman at the school. The student said, *"Commissioner Port is always there to listen to me, yarn with me and make me feel important"*.

He went further to say that Commissioner Port understands the students, acknowledges them and talks to them as equals, and that Commissioner Port, *"...gave me above all a*

way to find the voice to express myself". Coen Commissioner Port then responded by declaring that this particular student was his hero.

Everyone in the room was very moved by the impromptu sentiments expressed which were in part a testament to the hard work, support and mentoring role that not only Local Commissioner Port, but also many of our other Local Commissioners play in their communities. Coen Commissioner Port was proud to be recognised, but prouder still to witness a student stand up and speak frankly in front of not only his community, but also the guests present.

The Local Commissioners believe, like Local Commissioner Port, that many students and children throughout the Cape York Welfare Reform communities are silent heroes who with continued dedication and struggle will reap the benefit of their education for themselves and for their communities.

The Commission would like to extend its appreciation to Mr Noel Pearson, Mr Richie Ah Mat and Cape York Partnerships school Attendance Case Managers who attended the ceremony and have assisted with the work of the Commission in Coen.



Coen Local Commissioner Port