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Subject: SNAICC CONFERENCE - CLOSING REMARKS

SNAICC CONFERENCE – CLOSING REMARKS.
RAY BURROWS.
FRIDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2007.

What a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture it has been? How very proud it feels to have been part of this celebration.

And how fortunate we are to be here on the lands of the KUARNA PEOPLE WITH UNCLE LEWIS, a special ELDER of this land, and may I say ALL ELDERS ARE SPECIAL, and I have been so privileged to have been in his presence twice before. THANK YOU UNCLE LEWIS. I have a very special ELDER at Cherbourg just like you, my UNCLE JOE BUTTON. WHAT AN INSPIRATION YOU BOTH ARE! AND THERE ARE MANY MORE LIKE YOU. I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, and pay my respect to the Elders.

Hi! I am Ray Burrows, Director of Gundoo Day Care Centre, Cherbourg, one of only three MACS, Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services Centres in QLD, the other two being at Woorabinda and Palm Island, and how unfortunate that is for our little Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Veronica Johns, SNAICC Resource Service reckons that I know how to put in the low punches very effectively to Government Departments and I make no apologies for this, as I represent and am AND ALWAYS WILL BE a voice for our LITTLE CHILDREN.

I am an Executive member of SNAICC, and a very proud and passionate member of the Cherbourg Community for the past twelve years, and I am so very proud to have four of those wonderful people from the Cherbourg Community here with me at the Conference, ELVIE SANDOW, EDNA MALONE, JACQUI TAPAU, AND ROBYN BOND. I am a person who has grown up, and still growing up, seeing and experiencing the hardship, discrimination, poverty, and all the other demoralizing, negative attributes that are thrust against our people. But always feeling safe around wonderful people, who can always find a smile, always be ready to support, always have hope, always share the good times and the bad times, and being taught that family is everything. – AND WHAT A GREAT BIG FAMILY WE HAVE HERE AT THIS CONFERENCE.

When Julie rang me and invited me as a representative of SNAICC to make the closing remarks for the Conference, I felt so humbled and proud to have been given this honour. Those of you who have known me, whether it be for a short time or a long time, will certainly know that my life centres around the people of CHERBOURG, AND ESPECIALLY OUR LITTLE CHILDREN.

AND THIS HAS BEEN WHAT THIS CONFERENCE HAS BEEN ABOUT – OUR CHILDREN- CHILDREN WE CAN FEEL SO VERY PROUD OF. WE SAW THEM YESTERDAY LIVE, THE LITTLE ONES FROM THE KURA YULO CHILDREN'S CENTRE AND THE KALAYA CHILDREN'S CENTRE, and how brilliant and proud they were. WE SAW THEM THIS MORNING AS PART OF THE TAL-KIN-JERI DANCERS. WE SAW THEM HERE AMONGST US, OUR SISTERS WITH THEIR LITTLE CHILDREN, and WHAT WONDERFUL LITTLE CHILDREN THEY ARE. WE SAW THEM ON VIDEO, IN PHOTOGRAPHIC DISPLAYS, WE SAW THEIR WORK THROUGH ART. WE SAW AND ALWAYS SEE OUR CHILDREN SMILING UP, EVEN THROUGH ALL THE HARDSHIPS THEY ENDURE.

WE WERE TO HAVE SEEN THE CHILDREN FROM THE KUARNA PLAINS PRIMARY SCHOOL, proudly performing for us, but because of unforeseen circumstances, are unable to perform today.

I could go on praising our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children for hours, but I am limited to four minutes, so in these closing remarks, I would like to thank all those involved in planning and managing this Conference; the caterers – and weren't the meals terrific; our treasured Elder, Uncle Lewis O'Brien and the Talkurtinna Dancers; the Tal-kin-jeri Dancers who performed this morning; our many guests who spoke at the Conference, with a special thank you to our International guest ..speakers, Cindy Blackstock, whose booming voice awakened everyone on the first day – and what an inspiration Cindy is, to Terry Cross, who shared his knowledge and experiences with the American Indian people with us, and to Chelsea Yarri, whose passionate story of her years in foster care touched our hearts dearly; those who conducted workshops from which we gained so much knowledge and shared so many experiences, the Minister, Mr Mal Brough and the Opposition Spokesperson, Ms Jenny Macklin, and especially to you the participants.

Our Children today have again been put on the National Agenda with the release of the National Indigenous Child Care Plan, to which we do thank the Minister. Both sides of politics must realize that this is only a small stepping stone to solving the issues surrounding the plight of our Children in ensuring that they have equal opportunity to quality Early Childhood Education and Care.

I now have the honour of introducing to you MR WARREN MILERA, an Adelaide based singer-songwriter to perform for us.