

Fishy treat draws out islanders

CAITLAN CHARLES

IT MIGHT have been cold, raining and choppy out on the water, but it was not going to stop Palm Islanders catching fish for dinner.

After more than a month of strict regulations that prevented Palm residents leaving the island, even to fish from a boat, it was a welcome relief.

The Palm Island Aboriginal Council area is currently subject to biosecurity laws put in place to protect all indigenous communities in Australia from the coronavirus pandemic.

Palm Islanders cannot leave the island, even to visit Townsville for essential supplies, without going into 14 days isolation before returning to the island.

Palm residents were able to fish on Saturday and Sunday, with a competition for the biggest coral trout caught going to Malcolm Larry.

Palm Island Mayor Mislam Sam said there was an eagerness to catch fresh fish to eat.

He said while 30 boats registered, only about 22 made it out onto the water because of conditions.

"They (Palm Islanders) got to put fresh fish on the table for supper," Cr Sam said.

"A few families went out and it was a real good opportunity for them."

Cr Sam said the people who did fish were brave to weather the horrible conditions.

"It was freezing over here, it was windy and raining but within the (fishing) zone, we've got a bit of protection from the big swells," he said.

"It was pretty miserable conditions, but they couldn't wait to go out and get some supper on the table."

The Palm Island biosecurity area was extended to include the area between Palm, Curacoa, Fantome and Esk islands.

Originally, the community was not able to leave the island



WINNING CATCH Malcolm Larry with his 3.2kg fish, which he caught off Palm Island at the weekend.

as the biosecurity area ended at the high tide mark. Cr Sam said the council would now draw up a new plan so Palm residents could get back on the water next weekend.

"Hopefully there will be more favourable conditions," he said.

"The first plan was a trial and we're gonna do it again for this weekend and see how it goes."

"(Then) we can look at more options into the future."

Cr Sam said a return to some level of normality was important for his community.

\$14m boost for legal services

THREE Townsville organisations will benefit from a \$14 million cash injection from the State Government.

North Queensland Women's Legal Services will receive \$6.95 million, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Service will receive \$3.4 million and Townsville Community Legal will receive \$2.8 million over the next five years. It is part of a statewide \$119 million package for community legal services.

Attorney-General and Justice Minister Yvette D'Ath said the funding would ensure ongoing quality legal assistance services were

delivered to North Queenslanders. "Queensland's community legal sector delivers vital services to thousands of Queenslanders," Mrs D'Ath said. "Our community legal centres provide advice and assistance to some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people."

Townsville Community Legal has also been allocated \$858,695 to allow it to continue providing coronial assistance services, as part of a subcontracting arrangement with Caxton Legal Centre.

Townsville MP Scott Stewart said community legal services were important for the city.