

| NEWS |

From personal adversity to advocate for the disabled

ROBERT Pyne doesn't mind having a lot on his plate when it comes to helping disabled children make the most out of their lives.

Mr Pyne, 37, a regional disability liaison officer at James Cook University, has been nominated for an education award in *The Cairns Post's* inaugural Far Northern Honours by Janet Corcoran.

She says quadriplegic father-of-one Robert gave her the strength and enthusiasm to further her education at JCU in Cairns after she suffered a series of crippling strokes.

"Robert really goes beyond what he needs to do," Janet said.

"I went through two strokes within four days in 1998 and had to learn to walk and talk again," she said.

"He assisted me through a university diploma and has given me the confidence and enthusiasm I needed to get through my current studies in adult media," she said.

Janet is the only one who has almost completed the special course for those with brain acquired injuries.

"He always has time to help and encourage anyone," Janet said.

Robert dived off a sailing boat on Trinity Inlet in December 1991 and hit his head on a

Daniela La Spina

sandbank. The accident broke his spine and left him without the use of his legs and in a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

"What happened gave me more of a humanitarian outlook on life," he said.

Since then, his aim has been to help make people understand that having a disability is not a negative.

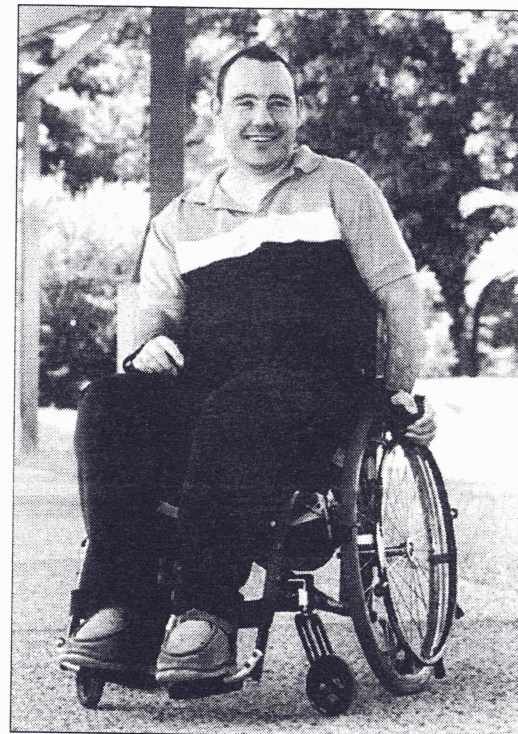
"I am happiest when a student with a disability chooses to study further at university or TAFE," he said.

The process for his encouragement is going out with Year 11 and 12 students to JCU for a two-day "tertiary-taster" course where they can attend a lecture, talk to university staff and visit the Advanced Analytical Centre.

He is involved with the Disability Council of Queensland, an advisory body to the Minister for Disability Services.

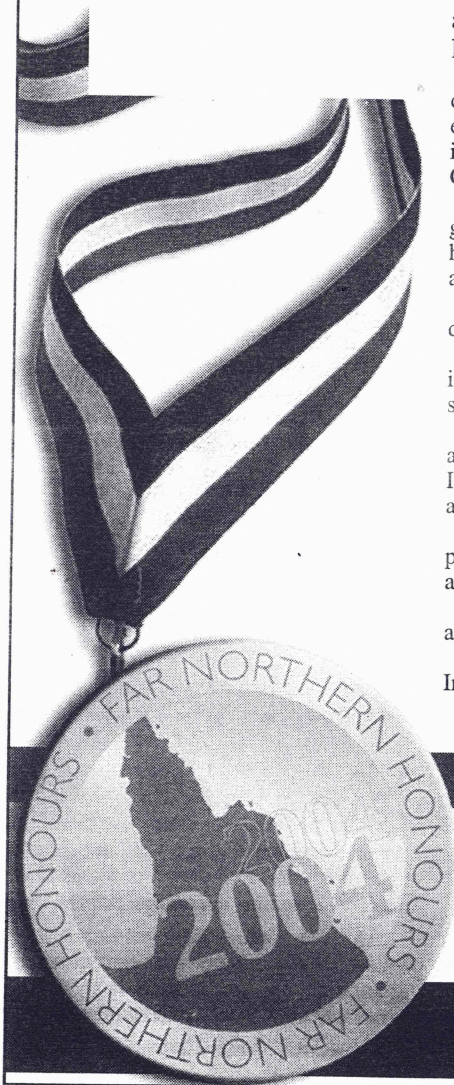
He also provides assistance to nurses at JCU about disabilities and gives speeches about rehabilitation.

He is the vice-president for Rights in Action, an independent advocacy for disabled people and has a law degree and can use his knowledge to aid and assist people with disability issues.



Pyne: Humanitarian outlook.

Picture: SUE WELLWOOD



CATEGORIES

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Honours nomination form: Page 14

