



Speech by

Hon. M. FOLEY

MEMBER FOR YERONGA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Biennial Festival of Music

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: I have pleasure in reporting to the Parliament on the 1999 Queensland Biennial Festival of Music. This \$2m Government investment in regional Queensland's cultural life visited 19 cities and centres around the State from 16 to 25 July. The inaugural Queensland Biennial was highly successful in meeting the Government's key objectives for the festival: a Statewide focus, music of international quality, and accessibility to ordinary Queenslanders from all walks of life.

More than 84,000 people attended festival events in the 19 centres visited, including Brisbane, Mackay and Townsville. The 48 events and 34 umbrella events reached a vast cross-section of people across the State—the first time that residents of places such as Alpha, Moranbah and Emerald have been included in a major cultural event of this scale.

The inaugural Queensland Biennial met the Government's seven key priority areas. It created more jobs for Queenslanders. Sixty per cent of the 733 artists/art workers employed were Queenslanders. Over 3,781 artists/art workers participated, compared with 2,500 in the 1995 Brisbane Biennial. Festival events built regional partnerships and networks. It skilled Queensland, the Smart State, with education and training opportunities for young and indigenous people and community groups. The broad range of musical experiences offered by the festival enhanced quality of life. Many events were held in places of environmental and cultural significance. The festival provided leadership in its unique scope, scale and intentions.

There has also been a satisfactory financial outcome, with a minimal operating deficit of just \$11,746—an acceptable outcome for a festival undertaken on such a vast scale and for the first time in such diverse regional communities with no guaranteed market audience. We believe that investment in the bush is a small price to pay for bringing a major cultural event to regional audiences.

This was not just about overcoming the tyranny of distance for the residents of Longreach, Moranbah or Emerald; it was about developing Queensland cultural life at grassroots—in and for the bush. The festival demonstrated its potential to develop economic opportunities for our diverse cultural, ethnic and regional groups. The festival also functioned as an effective educational event, with significant youth and indigenous components.

Some measure of the success of the inaugural Queensland Biennial Festival of Music can be gleaned from the media reports. With so much competition for air time and column inches from finance, politics and sport, how did the biennial rate as a story? Over 180 articles published in both local and national press about it before it started, another 53 during and after, 80 radio interviews and 25 glowing reviews put Queensland in the headlines. This is welcome recognition of an ambitious festival which has helped to put local Queensland music well and truly on the map of world music.
