



Speech by

CHRISTINE SCOTT

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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YEAR OF THE OUTBACK

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT (Charters Towers—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): I would like to share with the House today some of the energy and excitement occurring in my electorate and, at the same time, applaud the wonderful efforts of the people of the Aramac shire, their far-sighted council led by energetic Mayor Gary Peoples, able CEO Tony Jarvis and the team at the shire office.

Throughout the world the Australian outback is an icon. It stands proudly in the front line of the tourism industry and communities are paving the way for the outback to attract tourist interest for the 2002 Year of the Outback celebrations. Those celebrations will see the coming together of remote communities to provide a smorgasbord of the highest quality performers, performances, displays, shows and celebrations that I believe this country will have ever seen. The word 'outback' itself invokes a range of images of dusty sunsets across the expanse of a sweeping horizon and Australian pioneers carving out livelihoods in some of the most remote locations of the earth under the most extreme conditions imaginable.

We now have an opportunity to look at our heritage and recognise and celebrate with our rural and remote communities. We have a chance to shift our focus away from the coast and cities and be involved in the many activities and celebrations being offered over the seasons of 2002.

I would like to draw the attention of the members of this House to the efforts of one of my remote communities in Central Queensland. The Aramac shire is a community of only 980 residents spread across 23,000 square kilometres. Despite geographical remoteness and small numbers, they are committed to providing a real outback experience for locals and tourists alike to share. We have here a real gem of the outback. To mention just a few of its features, there are visible gardens in a tidy town, a new motel, a new QGAP facility—thank you, Mr Palaszczuk—a trendy relocated library and no vacant houses. Muttaborra boasts the best steak cook in the west in Fiona Turnbull at the Exchange Hotel, a newly renovated tourist attraction in Cassimatis's store and a wonderful volunteer tourist guide in Nev Bullen, as well as many other features.

The 2002 Year of the Outback celebrations will provide the scaffolding for those two communities to celebrate their pioneering history through the recognition of someone I would like to mention to members of the House. His name is Henry 'Harry' Redford. Born in 1841 of Irish convict stock, Redford grew up in the Hawkesbury River district and later drifted to the western regions of New South Wales and Queensland in search of a future. In 1871 he led the most daring cattle duffing case ever recorded in our history. He and his companions misappropriated 1,500 head of cattle from Bowen Downs and drove them through virtually unexplored country to sell in Adelaide. Harry has been recognised as a folk hero and earned the name of Captain Starlight.

The Aramac shire will release a recently obtained journal of the true story of Redford's adventure and provide an opportunity for travellers to join the cattle drive re-enactment from Aramac to Roma, the place of Redford's trial. The event will impact on seven central and western shires and tourists will be treated to three months of progressive outback experiences from bronco branding to camel racing, camp oven cooking and the Milky Way. This experience will commence at the Festival of Aramac from 17 to 19 May 2002.

Without having commenced any publicity, this tiny rural town is preparing for more than 300 motorhome and caravan bookings that have already been made for that weekend for three days of festivities, providing a full range of outback entertainment, country music singers, skydiving and an

agricultural show. These will lead into the launch of the cattle drive heading out of Aramac on Sunday, 19 May for Muttaborra, the first town of the historical re-enactment to benefit from its coming to town.

Outback spirit, hospitality and national pride will continue to be worn on the sleeve of my outback communities. I extend an open invitation to the Premier, the Deputy Premier, ministers and members of this House to experience the outback and demonstrate their support by attending this event. Indeed, a good starting point might be to have a few coldies near the statue of the white bull that led to Captain Starlight's downfall. It awaits you in the main street of Aramac, just outside the Aramac Hotel!
