



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH**

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Hansard 17 May 2001

**CENTENARY OF FEDERATION CELEBRATIONS**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (11.28 p.m.): Before I begin my speech in this adjournment debate, and in the interests of the fairness that I hope this parliament displays, I confirm that the member for Callide did rise and call Mr Speaker three times but he was not noticed by Mr Speaker.

The Centenary of Federation celebrations in Melbourne should have been an opportunity to proclaim loudly that we are Australians; that although we realise we still have a lot of hurdles to overcome we have, in fact, come a long way in our very short history. Here was an opportunity for the leaders of this country to offer future direction, hope and aspirations. There were none of these things at the ceremony. Instead it was a simpering exhibition of political correctness and a crass flaunting of wealth in a ceremony decidedly dripping with cultural cringe.

I am fiercely proud to be Australian. Warts and all, I love this land; but attending those celebrations showed me a side of those leading this country that made me embarrassed and ashamed. The major financial sponsors were recognised, as they should be, with a page dedicated to their generosity in a hard-bound commemorative book and with their names placed for eternity on the commemorative pillars unveiled during the celebration. This should be enough recognition, one would think, but no; this small select group were paraded on stage in a crass flaunting of wealth.

Recognising the original owners of this land once or twice has become part of every ceremony, but five, six, seven or more times is a little overkill, and I felt embarrassed for the original owners. In stating that, I must also acknowledge that the highlight of the whole three-hour ceremony for me was their smoking ceremony. It was wonderful. The music, although beautiful, was dirge-like and unbefitting such a celebration. It did not inspire the filling of lungs to belt out the national anthem with pride. The voices faded halfway through the softly played rendition, and it is hard to say whether the result was because of the music or the lack of knowledge of the words of the second verse. Either way, it was not a proud moment for this Australian.

It is a shame that all those who attended the Centenary of Federation celebrations did not pay their own airfares, accommodation and meals, as we did, for as taxpayers we should all feel robbed. As a nation we did not get our money's worth. In this politically correct time, we squander so many opportunities to claim and recognise our history. Warts and all, it is where we have come from, and it is what has made us a nation in which people are prepared to risk life and limb to improve their lives. People are only as great as their leaders, and if our leaders cannot recognise our past, celebrate our present and embrace our future with pride and enthusiasm, what hope is there for the rest of us?

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