



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Positive Rural Futures Conference

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.18 a.m.), by leave: I can announce today that Charleville will host the Positive Rural Futures Conference next year. The Positive Rural Futures Conference provides a forum to highlight the local region as well as a financial shot in the arm for the local economy. Hundreds of delegates are expected to travel to the south-west Queensland centre for the 2002 Positive Rural Futures Conference when it is due to be held in May next year. The conference in Charleville will have extra significance as it coincides with Australia's Year of the Outback.

The Positive Rural Futures Conferences are held annually for people from rural communities to come together and look strategically at the different economic and social issues confronting their communities and to help develop strategies for dealing with change now and in the future. Representatives from local governments, economic development organisations, chambers of commerce, rural small businesses, schools and educational services, and rural and community services will be encouraged to attend.

Last year's conference in Sarina was a success, with almost 300 people from 67 different communities in attendance. Previous Positive Rural Futures Conferences have been held in Cooktown, Goondiwindi, Biloela and Charters Towers. In October expressions of interest were sought from local governments in the central-west and south-west statistical division to host the conference. Murweh shire was recommended as the host. Both the Office of Rural Communities and the Department of Primary Industries, which both come under my portfolio, will support the conference.

Last month I visited Charleville to represent the Minister for Transport and Main Roads to commission the \$6 million Warrego River bridges project. I recently had the opportunity to address the South-West Queensland Local Government Association conference in Cunnamulla. I also opened the new QGAP office in Augathella, and I watched the first 20 minutes of the movie *Moulin Rouge* in a new 47-seat cinema just recently opened in Augathella. The community representatives I met with on those occasions were very positive about the future of their respective communities. So it is fitting that Charleville hosts the 2002 Positive Rural Futures Conference, which will have benefits for the wider south-west region.

I would like to congratulate the Murweh Shire Council and the people of Charleville and surrounds on the successful bid to host the conference. I look forward to the conference and the positive outcomes for Queensland.
