



Speech by

ROSA LEE LONG

MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

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TABLELAND TRAIL HORSE RIDERS ASSOCIATION

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (10.28 a.m.): I mention an enterprise in my Tablelands electorate that highlights the kind of get up and go attitude that still exists in rural areas. It involves a group called the Tableland Trail Horse Riders Association. Last year, members of the association rode the first 400 kilometres of the National Trail as part of an epic ride that started in Cooktown and ended in Canberra nine months later. This year they are staging a month-long packhorse mail run as part of local celebrations for federation. They will carry the mail by packhorse from Mareeba to Chillagoe, following in the footsteps of the pioneers.

Australia Post is issuing a special federation stamp that should become a valuable collector's item. It depicts the Chillagoe smelters and will be retained as that post office's official franking. A limited edition of 3,000 first-day covers will be issued. These will be on sale in post offices in Cairns, Atherton, Herberton, Irvinebank, Mareeba and Chillagoe and at the council offices of Mareeba and Atherton and at the local *Advertiser* newspaper offices in those centres.

The riders will pick up mail from each township as they pass through and deliver it for franking at Chillagoe on the final day. Mail will be carried on packhorses for nearly eight weeks along old roads, bush tracks and horse trails linking scattered towns and settlements.

Heading off from Mareeba on 25 August, the riders will pass through Mutchilba, Dimbulah, Walkamin and Tolga, arriving in Atherton on 2 September for a parade and other federation festivities. From Atherton the riders will head up into the ranges to Herberton, where they will take part in a Tin Festival before carrying on to the historic mining township of Irvinebank in time to attend a ball in a restored century-old hall. From there the riders will pass through Emuford, Petford and Almaden before arriving in style in Chillagoe to become part of festivities to celebrate 100 years since the opening of the smelters in the once mineral rich area. The riders will be escorted into town by a Cobb & Co. coach before ceremoniously handing over the mail to Australia Post for on-forwarding by more conventional carriers.

The organisers of the event would like to swell the number of riders taking part, and anyone young or old or not so young is being urged to think about joining what should prove to be the ride of a lifetime. I am sure that if any of the members present has a horse and a spare few weeks the organisers would welcome them with open arms.
