



Speech by

ROSA LEE LONG

MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

Hansard 18 October 2001

CENTENARY OF FEDERATION CELEBRATIONS

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (7.07 p.m.): The Centenary of Federation celebrations in Atherton were held in the precincts of old Chinatown. In the late 1800s Atherton consisted of many Chinese inhabitants who had earlier arrived in the Far North looking for gold. An influx of Chinese arrived in the Cooktown-Laura area and later came to the Atherton district to settle. They made a huge contribution to the area and were some of the first farmers of maize in the tableland area. The focus of the celebrations centred around local Chinese heritage with a very full program of events taking place. The festivities were in the vicinity of the Hou Wang Temple, which is the only one of its kind left in Australia today. The temple has been partly restored by Friends of the Temple group and drew a lot of interest from visitors and locals in the area. Guided tours were conducted, with some 3,000 visitors passing through the joss house.

The day's festivities were many and varied. Local markets were incorporated into the activities of the day, with an estimated 4,500 people in attendance. A local swing band played popular music to greet people in the morning. The historic *Savannahlander* train delivered visitors from Cairns via Kuranda and Mareeba. Passengers were then ferried by bus and horse-drawn carriages to the festivity area. A great bush poetry recital was heard from the main stage. The poet who was in attendance is well known locally and was also responsible for the working dog displays throughout the day. One of our local national youth envoys also gave a very informative speech on her activities for the year, a speech which made one very proud of our youth of today.

Performances by the Tableland Dance School and the Atherton Performing Arts Group were well received by the audience. The Cairns and District Chinese Association performed traditional Chinese dancing including the lion dance and the dragon dance which were also a highlight of the celebrations. In recognition of the Chinese Year of the Snake, a large serpent from the TALL, Tableland Artists Larger than Life, artistic group was on display. An Asian cooking demonstration using foods that would have been available at the time of Federation was conducted, drawing enthusiastic onlookers. A well-known Cairns artist showed his skills at Chinese ice carving.

I was very pleased to officially welcome the Federation Trail horse riders, who proceeded by horse-drawn carriages and drays. Federation scrolls were presented to the riders, who then collected the mail which was to be delivered to Chillagoe. Historical photographs and Chinese artefacts, including a split mural depicting the history of the Chinese in Atherton from 1885 to 1920, were on display at the old post office gallery. The celebrations were a resounding success and a fitting tribute to our bygone era.