



Speech by

**ROSA LEE LONG**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

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Hansard 4 December 2001

### **CHILLAGOE**

**Ms LEE LONG** (Tablelands—ONP) (7.26 p.m.): The town of Chillagoe in my electorate has a population at present of approximately 250 and is located 140 kilometres west of Mareeba via Dimbulah. It is hard to imagine that Chillagoe was a booming town between 1888 and 1915 with 10 hotels, two soft drink factories, two newspapers, dozens of businesses and was home to 10,000 residents between 1900 and 1915. I will just give a little of the history of Chillagoe before talking about celebrations held in September for the Centenary of Federation.

William Atherton actually founded Chillagoe but John Moffatt was the dominant force in base metal mining, and by the end of 1888 had registered a number of claims. Serious silver mining began in 1892 and small smelters were set up. A lease was granted originally for smelters to be set up at Kuranda so as to utilise the power from the Barron River scheme. However, in 1899 the mining company had to relocate the smelters to Chillagoe. By 1901 the railway had reached Chillagoe. The Chillagoe company employed between 700 and 1000 men, and the smelters covered five acres. The multicultural workforce in the mines included Chinese, Afghans, Italians, British and Scandinavians.

Unfortunately, the company collapsed in December 1901 because of difficulties processing the copper ore. However, it was reconstructed in 1902. In August this year, Chillagoe hosted the North Queensland Gold Panning Championships. All proceeds from this weekend went to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Chillagoe again had an influx of visitors for the Centenary of Federation celebrations on 22 and 23 September 2001. Throughout the two days there were some wonderful displays of a bygone era. There were static displays of vintage cars and engines, arts and crafts and amusement stalls. Blacksmithing skills were demonstrated as well.

Chillagoe, of course, has its limestone caves, and self-guided candlelight cave tours. The Bluff is one of Chillagoe's spectacular limestone outcrops. Fully guided tours were also available including the smelters that were also celebrating their centenary. Theatre performances tracing the region's history were included in the program of events. A special segment for billycart races was also included in the celebrations. A team of postal pack horse riders covered a round journey of 200 kilometres from Mareeba to Chillagoe travelling via Atherton, Malanda, Herberton and Irvinebank. The mail ride continued through the isolated communities of Emuford, Petford and Almaden before reaching its final destination where a horse-drawn Cobb & Co coach preceded the pack horse riders into Chillagoe.

The members of the Tableland Horse Riders Club traversed original stock routes and cattle trails, camping under the stars along the way. They arrived in time for the Chillagoe celebrations after almost a month in the saddle. Today, Chillagoe depends on cattle and mining, but tourism is fast becoming a most important industry. Marble mining has also been important—

Time expired.

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