



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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CHILDERS MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

Mr STRONG (Burnett—ALP) (7.27 p.m.): I take this opportunity to enlighten members and Queenslanders about an event or, more precisely, a celebration of community called the Childers Multicultural Festival, which took place a few weeks ago. The people of Childers decided six years ago to hold a multicultural festival to benefit the local business community, to lift the profile of their heritage town to squeeze more out of the tourist dollar and to bring the community together in celebrating the varied cultures represented by its permanent residents and well supported by the diverse nationalities of its transient backpacker workers.

The festival has grown not only in size but also in stature. The Isis Shire Council has always seen the big picture, with its strong commitment towards the success of this festival. The appointment of Nancy Calder as organiser guarantees the continuity of the festival and brings a high level of organisation from one year to the next, which we all know contributes to the goodwill involved between shopkeepers and stall holders. The council facilitates the closure of the Bruce Highway so that it can be used as a perfect venue for such a festival. A marvellous assortment of food stalls, craft stalls and beverage stalls, as well as every shop owner open for business, made for a wonderful sight along Highway 1.

Over 40,000 people were estimated to have attended this year's festival, all of whom would have been delighted with the fine array of international bands, traditional dancers from North America, singers from South America and the like. Also, local acts were well supported. They gave the impression that they were enjoying it more than their audiences.

With such a great venue as the main street, the sounds of different bands and acts echoed off the heritage buildings to give somewhat of a mardi gras type of feel. As my family and I walked up the street, our taste buds were tantalised by the many different aromas coming from the competing food stalls. Colours of all types abounded in children's traditional dress and flags of different nations. Its biggest drawcard is not the stalls which have grown in number and diversity, nor is it the entertainment which changes from year to year in both variety and quantity, but the atmosphere.

All accolades should go to the community of Childers for providing an atmosphere for their festival that families will drive for hours to experience. It comes from the smiling faces of the volunteers, the happy demeanour of council staff and the friendly acknowledgments of shopkeepers. It is the atmosphere of Childers that makes the cultural festival a huge success.
