



Speech by

ANITA PHILLIPS

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Hansard 9 April 2002

CENTENARY OF FEDERATION; *SHIP OF HOPE*

Ms PHILLIPS (Thuringowa—ALP) (11.51 a.m.): Recently, I was privileged to be present at the launch of the *Ship of Hope*, a project funded by this government's Centenary of Federation program. As part of the project, the Migrant Resource Centre, Townsville/Thuringowa Limited, built a monument in the form of a ship, the *Ship of Hope*. In this large ship's construction, a flowerbed containing flowers of many different colours symbolises the beauty and harmony in diversity. This monument, placed in a newly developed part of Pioneer Park behind the Weir State School in Thuringowa, is adjacent to the tail of an almost 50-metre long rainbow serpent, the biggest ever produced in Australia, representing the many Aboriginal cultures of Australia. This rainbow serpent is another Migrant Resource Centre project.

Over 1,300 people from all over Australia who have lived in the north Queensland region provided their names. Each name was written on an individual brass plaque with their country of origin and year of arrival in the region. These engraved plaques have been placed in alphabetical order around the ship, symbolising the act of immigration to this region and the reality of hope for building a home in this land. Many people provided names on behalf of their parents and grandparents.

The *Ship of Hope* concept was developed by Favardin Daliri, manager of the MRC, and his hardworking committee. It provides a dramatic, concrete record of all who have come to our region from overseas countries. On the day of the launch, I launched a publication called *Proud to be Australian*, also produced by the MRC. The book records short stories from 44 Australians from different cultural backgrounds who are living or have lived in our local area. These 44 individuals are not only proud Australians but also proud north Queenslanders. I quote from the preface of this booklet—

Australia, as a nation built through immigration on the backdrop of age-old indigenous cultures and traditions, has much to celebrate in relation to our achievements as a peaceful nation. In different parts of the world, cultural differences are being seen as a threat of an unknown reality. In many parts of world, differences of culture, race, religion and class form the basis for conflict, hatred and war. Australia, however, has the potential to make these differences a means of strength, power and progress. Here we can draw on different cultures as a means of accessing knowledge and different ways of seeing the world as well as different paths to progress and development which can all be complementary and add value to one another in this country called 'Australia'.

In launching *Proud to be Australian*, it prompted me to think about why I am proud to be an Australian—and the list is certainly a long one. This country has been and is home to some of the most talented and interesting people history has every known—from the man who gave us the Hills hoist to the man who has just given us our first gold medal in the Winter Olympics, just by taking his time. We excel in science, the arts, food, sport and literature. Our achievements include the black box flight recorder, plastic bank notes, wine casks, pacemakers and penicillin. Of course, we are a nation of heroes—brave men and women who have faced immeasurable odds, both at war and at home, and who have come out on top.

Basically, I decided that we are a nation of good all-rounders, and that is really something to be proud of. Maybe one of the reasons we are such good all-rounders is that we come from all around the world. Australia is one of the most culturally diverse nations on earth. We are heart and home to people from the Middle East, Europe, UK, Asia, China, Africa. The list is limited only by the countries on the earth. Some of these people are first generation Australians, many second or third; but only a small percentage of us, apart from our indigenous people, could lay claim to firmer ties. We are a nation of boat and plane people who have made their lives here, raised their families and contributed their own

cultural uniqueness and knowledge so that this country could move ahead—people who are a vital part of our unique local history and without whom we would have had much less to be proud of.

I congratulate the MRC and all involved in creating the *Ship of Hope*, which is such a tangible reminder of what it means to be Australian. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the MRC on all its activities.