



Speech by

CHRISTINE SCOTT

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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CHARTERS TOWERS COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT (Charters Towers—ALP) (11.22 p.m.): Tonight I would like to speak about a group of people who have worked hard for our community for many years. This group, the Charters Towers Country Music Association, has been instrumental in raising the profile of Charters Towers on a national and even international level through the tremendous success of the Charters Towers Country Music Festival. In May our city will host its 25th annual Country Music Festival. Over the past quarter of a century we have witnessed the growth of the festival from humble beginnings to becoming one of the most respected and well known country music events in Australia.

Festivals such as this are vital in our rural communities. They foster community awareness and unity, as well as being forums that our aspiring country music artists can use to showcase their talents. They also bring much-needed injections of money into our community. This money flows on through our whole district's economy. Visitors spend money in the hotels and eating places, utilise the motels and other accommodation and buy souvenirs. In fact, there would be few businesses not benefiting either directly or indirectly from the influx of visitors our festival attracts each year. 2002 is the Year of the Outback, and the Australian outback's spirit is alive and well in groups such as these. The true heart and soul of our bush is reflected each May Day weekend with everyone from the children from day care centres to the elderly taking part in some way.

The Charters Towers Country Music Festival is known as a very friendly festival where many long-lasting friendships are forged. It is also known for being very professionally run. Our festival is recognised as the largest amateur country music festival in the southern hemisphere, with over 800 entries being performed at four different venues within the showgrounds on the weekend. Many of our best-loved country artists have strutted their stuff at our Charters Towers festival. Living legends such as Slim Dusty and Reg Lindsay have rubbed shoulders with aspiring artists who are waiting for their break in the music industry and see our festival as an important stepping stone to a career in country music. The festival gives youth the opportunity to pursue their dreams and can provide a stairway to stardom.

An event like the Charters Towers Country Music Festival does not just happen. There is an enormous amount of time and effort expended by a loyal and dedicated team of volunteers in the planning and running of the event. I cannot stress too strongly how important groups such as these are to all of us who live and work in the rural communities around our state. Tonight I call upon this parliament to honour the work and achievements of the selfless groups of individuals like those who make up the Charters Towers Country Music Association—groups who work tirelessly to make all our lives richer and our communities better and happier places in which to live.