



Speech by

**Andrew Cripps**

**MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK**

Hansard Tuesday, 22 May 2007

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## **FEAST OF THE THREE SAINTS, AUSTRALIAN-ITALIAN FESTIVAL**

**Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (9.59 pm): Last week Queenslanders across the state celebrated Heritage Week. In my electorate of Hinchinbrook a significant proportion of the community has Italian and Sicilian heritage. Several events and organisations in my electorate celebrate and promote the culture and heritage of Italian and Sicilian people and, indeed, this is an important part of Queensland's culture and heritage.

The Feast of the Three Saints is held every year in Silkwood on the first weekend in May. This event brings people together in celebration from all over north Queensland and interstate. This year marked the 57th anniversary of the Feast of the Three Saints.

The history of that event began in 1950 when the statues of three brothers, St Alfio, St Cirino and St Filadelfio, were brought from Sicily to Silkwood by Rosario Tornabene. I was pleased to join the three saints committee and the crowd of thousands at the feast in Silkwood on the first weekend in May this year. In 1939 Tornabene's wife suffered complications following the birth of their daughter, Vera. A number of very tense days followed as the illness of his wife and daughter continued. One night in a restless sleep Tornabene dreamt of the three saints, who reassured him. In the morning Rosario vowed that if his daughter and wife survived he would provide for the statues to be brought from Sicily to Silkwood. Both his wife and daughter survived and a decade later he honoured his commitment. Fifty-seven years later the local Sicilian community continues to celebrate the Feast of the Three Saints as an ongoing tribute to the faith of Rosario Tornabene but also in recognition of the wonderful culture that Sicilian people have brought to Queensland. Past, current and future generations remain proud of this heritage.

One of north Queensland's most colourful events is the Australian-Italian Festival held in Ingham. The 16th Australian-Italian Festival was held between 16 and 20 May this year. In 2006 the Australian-Italian Festival was the winner of the North Queensland Tourism Awards and a finalist of the Queensland Tourism Awards. The annual festival is a tribute to the Italian heritage of many families in the Herbert River district and had its beginnings as an idea from a community workshop designed to attract people to the area to boost the tourism industry and diversify the economic base of the area. Today the award-winning event attracts thousands of people from across Australia. The festival showcases the passion and vibrancy of Australian culture and traditions. The hardworking committee sets very high standards for itself and each year strives to improve the program of events. I was pleased to be invited to serve on the advisory board of the Australian-Italian Festival and look forward to lending the festival my support in years to come.

Importantly, feasts and festivals are not the only means by which heritage and culture of Italian and Sicilian people in north Queensland is being maintained and remembered. The Tully and District Italian Pioneers Committee will soon publish a history of Italian and Sicilian people in the Tully area. This will be a valuable document of the history and culture of the many waves of Italian and Sicilian migrants who came to north Queensland in the 19th and 20th centuries. Italian and Sicilian people have made a wonderful contribution to our state, and I am privileged to represent many of them from the Hinchinbrook electorate in the Queensland parliament.