




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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ADJOURNMENT

Gladstone Harbour Festival

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (9.06 pm): I rise to highlight one of Central Queensland's most cherished community events, the Gladstone Harbour Festival, which was held again this year over the Easter long weekend. For more than 60 years the Gladstone Harbour Festival has been a cornerstone of the regional celebration, showcasing the spirit, culture and resilience of the Gladstone community, which I am so proud of. What began as a modest event to mark the arrival of the yachts in the Brisbane to Gladstone Yacht Race has grown into a vibrant, multi-day celebration that draws thousands of locals and plenty of visitors into our region. This year's festival did not disappoint. It was absolutely amazing. With fireworks for kids over the harbour, free family entertainment all weekend, live music, carnival rides and local food vendors, the event once again delivered a world-class experience, and it was all made possible by the tireless efforts of volunteers and local organisers in the Gladstone region.

I want to pay particular tribute to the Gladstone Harbour Festival committee that organises this event every year. Year after year they dedicate countless hours to planning and executing this beloved tradition—one of the last free festivals held not only in Queensland but in Australia. Their commitment to delivering a free, inclusive and community-led event reflects the best of regional Australia and regional Queensland and Central Queensland in particular. Events like these do not happen without local engagement and supporters. I want to give a big thank you to the sponsors of the Gladstone Harbour Festival each year. They continue to keep it going with free entertainment for the kids and families in Gladstone.

The Harbour Festival also provides a vital boost to our local economy, making sure that tourists come in and the hospitality industry is supported. Businesses and community groups benefit on the back of that. In a region driven by industry and innovation, it is always good to see that a festival like ours offers a moment to celebrate what makes Gladstone a truly unique place to live and play, with our people, our harbour and our shared pride in the place we call home.

At times when regional voices are often overshadowed, events like the Harbour Festival remind us very strongly of the unity in rural and regional Australia. Once again I extend my congratulations to everyone who was involved, and I look forward to seeing the festival continue to grow.

I want to give a shout-out to the Gladstone Regional Council which has brought back the Brisbane to Gladstone Yacht Race and the festivities that go on with that event, particularly on the Brisbane to Gladstone Village that is set up by the boys from Lightbox every year to make sure everyone in Gladstone can go along and have a fantastic luncheon on the Friday and then a line-crossing party on the Sunday night where, I must say to everyone, I got up on stage in front of 500 people and sung *Sweet Caroline*. Wasn't that a great treat for the crowd!

With the eight seconds I have left, I congratulate Cameron Munster and the Queensland State of Origin side who are playing over in Western Australia on Wednesday. I wish them the best of luck.