



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Leichhardt Electorate

SPEECH

Thursday, 5 December 2002

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Entsch, Warren, MP

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Mr ENTSCHE (Leichhardt—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources) (9.43 am)—I had the pleasure on Saturday of travelling to the small Cape York community of Coen in my electorate to participate in a couple of very special events. The first was the opening of the heritage museum up there. This building was actually taken from Merapah Station and re-erected in the town of Coen. The idea to turn it into a heritage museum highlighting the mining, communications and pastoral history of the cape was raised four years ago by Gail Clark. It was funded by some \$70,000 of NHT money, but I would suggest that there was probably about five or six times that amount donated in kind in the labour and effort undertaken by the community.

It was an absolutely superb event. I would like to acknowledge Gail and her husband, Peter; Jackie Perry and her husband, John; and Rex Pratt for their magnificent effort in driving this whole initiative. Marina Clark, Gail's daughter, also played a very significant role. It was a magnificent event on the day. What made it even more special was the fact that, as we arrived, that day brought the first rain since March this year. So it was quite a celebration in the rain and it was very significant.

This is something you would only see in bush towns. I was ready to cut the ribbon and was wondering where the scissors were when the local publican Brett Santowski arrived on his Harley Davidson, on the only bit of bitumen in the cape, with Mrs Taylor on the back—she is 85 years old and is one of the older residents—and presented me with the scissors from the back of the Harley Davidson. It was a very special event.

That night we had the Coen debutante ball—the first one in 23 years. Stacey Gordon, Nita Rae Jackson, Lana Redding, Christine Leet, Rebecca Blackman and Leandra Port—a young Aboriginal lass from Coen—and the junior deb, Charlene Bulmer, are beautiful young girls who were dressed to the hilt. It was an absolutely superb night. It was organised by Jackie Perry, Gail Clark and Cherrill Mehonoshen. It has been 23 years since we have had a debutante ball in Coen. I received these girls as debutantes. One of the special things was Brett Santowski and his wife shutting the pub, which is just across the road, at 9 o'clock on this Saturday night so that everybody could go across and participate in and show support for this debutante ball. You would never see this happen anywhere else: shutting down Saturday night trading so that people could support a debutante event in the town. I congratulate those in Coen who were involved in this. It certainly was a very special event. I certainly look forward to the next debutante ball, and I hope it will not be another 23 years before the next one. (*Time expired*)