



SPEECH

CRAIG EMERSON

Member for Rankin

ADJOURNMENT

Filipino-Australian Foundation of Queensland

21 June 2007

Dr EMERSON (Rankin) (12.13 p.m.)—I am pleased to have accepted an invitation of the Filipino-Australian Foundation of Queensland to represent Labor leader Kevin Rudd at its gala event the *Beauty of Philippine Festival*, on Saturday, 30 June 2007 at the Logan Entertainment Centre in my electorate of Rankin. The event will have around 600 guests, including the honorary Consul-General of the Philippines, Alan Grummitt, and his wife, Wendy, officers and members of different Filipino organisations in Australia, and families and friends of the local Filipino community in Logan City. On the evening there will be a coronation of Mr and Miss Philippines Australia and the winners will travel to the Philippines as ambassadors of goodwill.

The Filipino-Australian Foundation of Queensland was established in 1996. As well as supporting families, it has a particular focus on its active youth program. Its aims are to encourage active participation in civics and national affairs through training in public speaking and cultural awareness. It aims to promote the colourful and unique culture and traditions of Filipinos so that Filipino-Australian young people develop a genuine appreciation for and pride in their heritage and values.

As a result of successful fundraising activities such as this pageant, the Filipino-Australian Foundation has granted more than 100 grant-in-aid scholarships to poor students in various schools in the Philippines. The foundation sends regular delegations to the Philippines where they visit schools and hospitals, participate in cultural festivals and meet community leaders. The foundation has provided many scholarships over 10 years to help educate and improve the health of very poor and needy people in the Philippines. Some of these donations have been used for improvements to school libraries, educational material for the La Union School for the Deaf and Blind, and a donation of medical trolleys to hospitals. In Australia the foundation has financially assisted Filipino-Australians who have represented Australia at the Commonwealth Games, the Olympics and interstate competitions either in sports, arts, academia or music.

Mr Mauro Somodio and his wife, Cecilia, as well as many board members and community supporters over the years, have helped to establish and run this foundation. The foundation is one of several Filipino groups in Queensland. The Filipino community has enriched our lives in so many ways, such as through 4EB community radio, the Catholic Filipino Australian Chaplaincy, the Centre for Philippine Concerns Australia, several multicultural groups throughout regional Queensland and, in my own electorate, the Logan Filipino-Australian Community Association. This community group is well established and respected in Logan City. Mr Orly Vargas is a stalwart of

the local Filipino-Australian community. He has welcomed numerous families to Logan City and assisted them in settling there.

Another tireless worker in the local Filipino community is Ruth Palamai, who was recently awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for her service to multiculturalism. Ruth, of Woodridge, has held multiple positions of community involvement. They have included her role as a case officer for the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, where Mrs Palamai assisted in the planning and implementation of Harmony Day, an event aimed at promoting community harmony and addressing issues of race in Australia. A radio presenter and panel operator on Radio 4EB's Filipino radio program, Mrs Palamai is also a consultant editor of the resource booklet *Living and working in Logan*. For several years she was an organising committee member of the Filipino festival Bayanihan, worked at Multilink as Migrant Employment Officer and was a resource speaker at Job Search Training for Filipino migrants. She is also a member of the Ethnic Communities Council of Logan. Congratulations to Mrs Palamai on receiving this very prestigious award. It is so richly deserved. As I visit organisations and community groups throughout my electorate, I often meet up with Ruth. She has amazing energy and enthusiasm to assist the residents of Logan City and the local Filipino community.

I want to conclude by paying tribute to the entire Filipino community of Australia and, in particular, south-east Queensland. They make an enormous contribution to our culture and our society. When you go to churches you find that very often they form the choir. They are great community workers and they are a source of great pride in Logan City, which has demonstrated how well people from different cultures can work together to create a rich and more diverse Australia.