



Proud Aussies vote with their feet

THONG-throwing competitions, cockroach races and multicultural performances played out across Queensland to mark Australia Day.

Thousands gathered at South Bank in Brisbane where the state's biggest free Australia Day celebrations were held, including a concert featuring ARIA Award winner Clare Bowditch.

Event organisers expected crowd figures to total more than 80,000 when festivities culminated in fireworks at 7.30pm (AEST).

"We had some cultural performances from the Philippines to Ethiopia, circus acts, drumming, illusion shows, African song workshops, Polynesian dance and cheerleading as well," South Bank Corporation events manager David Contarini said.

Premier Anna Bligh said the 2009 Australia Day celebration was bigger and brighter as Queensland commemorated 150 years of independence from New South Wales as well.

Hundreds gathered at Brisbane's Story Bridge Hotel to witness the world championship cockroach races.

Indigenous people marked Survival Day with a march from Parliament House to South Brisbane, while 1500 surfers paddled out to sea on the Gold Coast to form a map of Australia in protest against loads of sand being moved to the Kirra Point beach, which they say is destroying the world's best point breaks and the area's reef.

About 3400 people became Australian citizens. – AAP