

Qld: Thousands mark Australia Day across Qld

BRISBANE, Jan 26 AAP - Thong throwing competitions, cockroach races and multicultural performances have 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 expect crowd figures to total to more than 80,000 by the end of Monday with festivities culminating 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.

"There's a huge multicultural aspect ... because Australia is a very vast and multicultural country, we try to bring that out in the programming."

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

Hundreds also 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 1,500 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 3,400 people became Australian citizens at more than 60 ceremonies across the state.

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