

“ Going back 100 years, Grafton St was Chinatown in Cairns and the parade was in the street, that's where all the celebrations were held ... it will make it a true street festival again



Here it is: Chinese New Year celebrations organiser Nathan Lee Long hopes to get the festival back to Grafton St next year.

Photo: TOM LEE

Chinese New Year to reclaim the streets

CHINESE New Year is meant to be the street party of the year in Cairns, but it's been a while since the festivities were actually held on the street.

But organisers hope to return the annual celebration to its traditional home in 2013, with plans to close off Grafton St for a night of food, fireworks and fun.

"Going back 100 years, Grafton St was Chinatown in Cairns and the parade was in the street, and that's where all



DANIEL STRUDWICK
strudwick@tcp.newsnet.com.au

the celebrations were held," organiser Nathan Lee Long said.

"It will make it a true street festival again, because it's become more of an event in a park than a street festival," Chinese New Year celebra-

tion in Cairns draw about 10,000 people each year and the action has been held on the Esplanade in recent years.

But the Cairns and District Chinese Association Inc is working with Cairns MP Gavin Kling to shift the festival with the permission of Grafton St traders and the council.

"The traders we've spoken to are seeing it as an opportunity to bring something back to Grafton St," Mr Lee Long

said. "So much is done on the Esplanade and the traders want to see something in the middle of the city and see things come back alive a little."

Early plans for the event involve closing Grafton St between Shields and Spence streets for the night of February 8, 2013.

The street would be filled with cultural displays, traditional decorations and street stalls, and the local restaur-

ants and boutiques could stay open for the night.

A stage would be set up for entertainment and the traditional fireworks would be launched from the roof of a Grafton St building.

An initial round of consultation has been held with some Grafton St business owners. Another information session will be held with the broader CBD community in the coming fortnight, Mr Lee Long said.