



Speech by

BARBARA STONE

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

Hansard 30 May 2001

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (2.30 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise and talk about a bill that promotes tolerance in a multicultural society while allowing freedom of speech and ensures that people are able to live peaceful and dignified lives free from racial or religious vilification. There have been calls from the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and multicultural groups for stronger laws in relation to the incitement of religious or racial vilification. Firstly, I would like to speak about one of those multicultural groups, a group that promotes peace, harmony and an inclusive society—the Buddha's Light International Association of Queensland located at the Chung Tian Temple. This bill certainly provides for the type of society that they promote.

The Chung Tian Temple is located in the electorate of Springwood at Priestdale. The temple is located in some of our unique bushland and is complemented by beautiful gardens. I have been fortunate to attend the temple on several occasions. As soon as we enter the area the serenity and beauty is breathtaking.

The Buddha's Light International Association actively encourages all members of the community to use its facilities and attend significant events, such as Chinese New Year celebrations, the Lantern Festival and recently the Buddha's birthday. And yet it was not that many years ago that people targeted them and did not want them in our community.

This year the Buddha's birthday was held in the South Bank Parklands to cater for the large numbers of people attracted to the event. Visitors sampled food from Japan, China, India and Thailand. They watched kung-fu displays and dragon dances. The temple offers a range of activities to the community, including craft lessons, language lessons, relaxation techniques and, of course, a place to worship.

The Chung Tian Temple addresses the growing interest in Eastern culture and adds Chinese architectural heritage to our state. Tourists, students and Chung Tian devotees are given the opportunity to explore Buddhist teachings and culture, which reflects the multiculturalism encouraged by the Beattie Labor government. The temple houses a substantial collection of Buddha statues, Chinese calligraphy works, paintings, crafts and other Asian artefacts.

This active community group supports a wide range of people in the community. It raises money and gives support resources and services to many charities and people in need in our community. It truly promotes kindness, compassion and joy. The association would have to be one of the best hosts to all who visit. They are gentle people who enjoy showing this fascinating place to visitors and certainly provide the best hospitality. One of the things I enjoy most when I visit the temple is having a cup of Chinese tea and a chat with the Chinese Buddhist monks.

I encourage everyone to visit the temple and enjoy its beauty. In particular, I encourage the people of the Springwood electorate and the Logan community to visit this wonderful attraction that is right at their back door. I would hate to think that this gentle group of people could be the subject of vandalism or some other crime due to racial or religious vilification. However, we cannot bury our heads in the sand. We need to protect these people and so many more like them.

This bill amends the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 to include both civil and criminal sanctions against anyone who makes an unlawful public statement that incites hatred, serious contempt or

severe ridicule of another person or group on the basis of their race or religion. This bill is not just about hate-speech but all forms of communication to the public. I know from speaking to the Buddha's Light International Association that it is pleased to see a bill that supports a multicultural society.

The criminal sanctions will apply only to the new offence of serious racial or religious vilification. The conduct must be done knowingly or recklessly and the incitement must be by means of threatening, or inciting others to threaten, physical harm towards the person or group or their property.

Once again, I am happy to support a bill that protects freedom of speech, promotes a peaceful and harmonious multicultural society—a bill that provides protection to many great individuals and groups such as the Buddha's Light International Association.
