



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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PEACE PAVILION; MULTICULTURALISM

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (11.16 p.m.): I bring to the attention of the House an important project which was officially opened at Evandale on the Gold Coast recently and at which I was privileged to represent the Premier. The project was the Peace Pavilion sponsored by the Brahma Kumaris Raja yoga meditation centres across Australia. The Brahma Kumaris is a global organisation committed to the ideal promotion and practice of peace on all levels. The organisation has over 4,000 branches in 80 countries worldwide. Represented at the opening was a mixture of culture, religion and race, including Aboriginal, Hindu, Moslems, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists and many others.

The Queensland government was able to provide the funds for the Peace Pavilion through the efforts of Multicultural Affairs Queensland in the Premier's department. The project fits in neatly with the Multicultural Queensland Policy which, at its most fundamental, aims to create harmony and cohesion in our culturally diverse society. Multiculturalism as a concept and a policy results from the desire for peace in our own country and the world. If we look around the world and read events reported in the media, we see that racial and religious hatred are often a source of violent conflict, sometimes civil war and occasionally attempted genocide. Our policy of multiculturalism aims to prevent such conflicts arising in Australia. Multiculturalism as a policy should ensure that all Australians have equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities to participate in all aspects of national life without prejudice or discrimination.

The purpose of this policy is to value our diversity and to use the energy arising from it for our economic and social development. To achieve this, the government has some outstanding initiatives. In March the Premier introduced into parliament amendments to Queensland's Anti-Discrimination Act which make racial and religious vilification an offence. This will ensure that published hate material which has the potential to incite racial and religious conflict will be reduced to a minimum and, where it does appear, can be pursued under these laws. The Queensland government has introduced the Local Area Multicultural Partnership program whereby 14 councils around the state, including the Gold Coast, have received a grant through Multicultural Affairs Queensland to develop community relations strategies relevant to the local needs. Government is also strongly committed to reconciliation and wants to ensure that both reconciliation and multiculturalism succeed.

To this end, there are specific projects which are government funded. The purpose of these projects is to ensure that people understand multiculturalism and reconciliation as two approaches to achieving harmony. Both depend on the recognition that any form of racism is never acceptable and that it will only work well in our nation if both concepts are embraced. The Peace Pavilion is a symbol of the government's support for community initiatives which promote multiculturalism, reconciliation, harmony and peace in our society. I am sure that those ideals are supported by the vast majority of people in our community.
