



Speech by

Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Wednesday, 17 June 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Indian Community Ministerial Round Table

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.06 am): We are well aware of the reports in the media which highlighted alleged incidents of racial tension amongst Indian students in Victoria and also New South Wales. These sorts of alleged incidents should not be tolerated anywhere in Australia.

I am pleased that to date there have been no incidents reported in Queensland. But I would like to reassure parents of Indian students who are studying in Queensland that the Bligh government is committed to ensuring their ongoing safety. That is why today I will convene a ministerial round table with the Indian community, along with the Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. Geoff Wilson, and I note, Mr Speaker, that you will be attending as well.

Queensland is known for its racial tolerance and has always enjoyed a harmonious relationship with Indian migrants. The first Indian migrants began arriving in Queensland in the early 1800s. Today, there are more than 26,000 Queenslanders who have Indian ancestry. In Australia, there are about 95,000 Indian students studying and they invest \$15.5 billion into the Australian economy. Having studied overseas in London myself, I understand what a big step it is to pack up your life for a period of time and live in another country.

Queensland's universities now have a reputation of being world class and attract 13,000 of the brightest Indian students in pursuit of educational excellence. Indian students are the largest number of foreign students studying in Queensland and play a vital part in Queensland's economy, contributing almost \$1.9 billion last financial year. We have enjoyed an excellent reputation for academic excellence which we are very keen to protect.

A key priority of the Bligh government is to ensure that the incidents seen in southern states do not occur here in Queensland. Queensland is regarded internationally as a safe and friendly location for both international students and visitors and we are committed to retaining this reputation.

Today at this round table there will be representatives from the Indian community who are living in Queensland. We will be meeting with them to ensure that these ongoing relationships are strengthened and not tainted by incidents that have occurred in other states. The aim of the round table is to facilitate an open dialogue with the Indian community so that they can raise their concerns and exchange information.

Delegates attending the forum include Indian community leaders such as Professor Sarva-Daman Singh from the Consulate of India, representatives from three major universities as well as Deputy Commissioner Ian Stewart from the Queensland Police Service. I am confident that the round table will prove to be a very worthwhile forum where relationships are enhanced and new strategies to combat incidents of racism will be discussed.