



Speech by

## Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Friday, 19 June 2009

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### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### World Refugee Day

**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (9.49 am): Tomorrow we celebrate World Refugee Day. The Bligh government has invested \$30,000 in the Multicultural Development Association for its week-long celebrations for World Refugee Day. This will culminate in a huge festival at the Annerley Soccer Club next Sunday, 28 June. This week I also attended a business leaders' breakfast, hosted by St Vincent de Paul, looking at the contribution that 90 volunteers make to going into families' homes and helping them to learn English.

Tonight I will join with multicultural champion Katie Noonan; author Nick Earls; Queenslander of the Year, Sergeant Jim Bellos; and refugee families to lead a candlelit walk over the Goodwill Bridge to mark this significant event. The United Nations World Refugee Day is a day for serious reflection. All Queenslanders—indeed all Australians—should stop and think about what we can do as individuals and as a society to rescue the citizens of the world who are trapped in the horrors of war, lawlessness, poverty and famine.

This year's theme 'Freedom from Fear' highlights the extraordinary circumstances that ordinary people have faced in their quest to find a safe place to live. The aims of World Refugee Week are to educate the community about refugees, to help people understand the many challenges faced by them, and to celebrate the contribution that they make to our community.

There are an estimated 27 million refugees world-wide, persecuted because of their ethnicity, religion, race or political views. Currently there are more than 700,000 refugees settled in Australia. An estimated 13,750 refugees arrive in Australia annually under our humanitarian program. Since 1999, more than 11,500 refugees have settled in Queensland, mainly in the south-east areas such as Brisbane, Logan and Toowoomba. I know from personally meeting some of these families that they have a better life and a greater opportunity now for their children, overcoming adverse conditions and in many cases personal tragedy. They are indeed survivors.

The Bligh government is continuing to strengthen multicultural communities through the Multicultural Assistance Program. This year, 76 community projects and events will occur across the state to support refugees and multicultural communities.