



Speech by

Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Tuesday, 24 November 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fearnley, Mr K; Indian Students

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.20 am): Like all Queenslanders, I was shocked and disturbed to hear of the humiliating treatment suffered by Australian wheelchair athlete Kurt Fearnley at Brisbane Airport overnight. Kurt Fearnley is a world-class athlete who had just completed the Kokoda Trail, a feat many Australians aspire to but very few achieve. What Jetstar has done to Kurt Fearnley is un-Australian, unjust and unfair. Jetstar should immediately change its policy and ensure that all people with a disability are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

On another note, today at Parliament House the Minister for Education and I will be hosting the second Indian ministerial round table. It will bring together student representatives, local Indian community leaders and government members to build on the outcomes of the first round table held in June. In hosting this second round table, we are sending a very clear signal that racism has no place in Queensland.

While the opposition has no multicultural policies, we have a plan to support Queenslanders from all cultural backgrounds. Queensland is open for business to international students and we have a good track record of welcoming them to our state. As Queensland's population continues to grow, so does our international student population. Currently around 17,000 students from India are enrolled in Queensland, which is up from 13,000 last year. They all have a right to feel safe and welcome here, and to be treated with respect.

So far Queensland has avoided the racially motivated attacks seen this year in other parts of the country and we want to keep it that way. Therefore, in June I announced the appointment of an Indian community liaison officer to work with international students. Today is about reaffirming our commitment to Queensland's Indian community, which can count on the support of the Bligh government.