




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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ADJOURNMENT

Queensland Parliamentary Friends of Israel

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (9.09 pm): I wish to speak this evening on the formation of the Queensland Parliamentary Friends of Israel, of which I am honoured to be the inaugural chairperson. In a spirit of bipartisanship, many of my parliamentary colleagues met on 16 October last year to hold our launch and annual general meeting in order to form this important parliamentary group. I wish to place on record my gratitude that this group was established in a bipartisan manner, as no political party has a mortgage on culture or religion. We were honoured to be joined by many prominent members of the Jewish community such as Dr Colin Rubenstein AM and Mr Jason Steinberg from the Board of Jewish Deputies. The inaugural keynote speaker was world renowned Professor Efraim Inbar, who is the director of the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Centre for Strategic Studies. The bipartisan charter of the Queensland Parliamentary Friends of Israel group includes: fostering cultural links and opportunities between Israel and Queensland; encouraging the development of friendly relations and ties between the Queensland Parliament and Israel; and enhancing interaction between Queensland and Israel through meetings and discussions with Israel representatives and Israeli communities in Queensland.

Australia has always had a particularly close bipartisan relationship with Israel. We were one of the first countries to vote in favour of the 1947 United Nations partition resolution—a precursor to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. The relationship between our two countries was made even stronger when Australia gave official recognition to the state of Israel on 27 January 1949. In 2008 the Australian parliament congratulated Israel on 60 years of statehood. The trade ties between our two countries have become stronger, especially with the formation of the Australia Israel Chamber of Commerce (AICC). The AICC regularly leads delegations to Israel to encourage stronger trade ties between these two countries. In the period 2012-13 Australia and Israel enjoyed a good commercial relationship with two-way trade worth \$899 million. It is important that Queensland continue to seek further economic trade opportunities with this strategically important ally, who has technological expertise across many fields. Indeed, there is much we can learn from one another, given our respective harsh geographical features in parts and dependence on cutting-edge technology.

Over the next year, the Queensland Parliamentary Friends of Israel will host events to encourage interaction between parliament and Israeli communities in this state. With the invaluable help of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC), we look forward to fostering stronger economic, cultural and educational ties between the nation state of Israel and our wonderful state of Queensland. The Queensland Parliamentary Friends of Israel will work with the Queensland Jewish community to encourage the development of stronger ties between the Queensland parliament and Israel. Together as a group, all members look forward to fostering greater cultural and economic opportunities between our state and Israel. Shalom.