




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Harmony Day; New Zealand, Shootings

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.09 am): On Tuesday evening I attended the Premier's Harmony Day reception here at Parliament House, along with several hundred members of Queensland's multicultural community, as well as yourself, Mr Speaker, and many of our fellow members of the House. The Premier's reception is more relevant than ever in light of the recent Christchurch terror attacks that cost 50 innocent people their lives.

While that tragic event was mourned, Harmony Day overwhelmingly reflected a positive message—that Queenslanders from all backgrounds stand together for inclusion, for decency, for embracing everyone and for love, not hate. As Queenslanders, we must continually recommit ourselves to a society built on peace and harmony, a society built on celebrating, not just tolerating diversity and inclusion; hence, the growing significance of Harmony Day when thousands of Queenslanders wear orange and spend time with colleagues, neighbours, friends and the broader community.

Hundreds of Harmony Day events were held across Queensland last week with the resounding message that everyone belongs. Queensland's diversity is one of its greatest strengths, making it a wonderful place to live, as we all know—a society where people of every background can proudly celebrate their culture and heritage and can gather together to practise their religion of choice or not practise one at all, a society where everyone is welcome and where everyone belongs. Like our brothers and sisters in New Zealand, Queenslanders of all backgrounds have united to reject hatred, to reject division, to reject racism.

The response we have seen in the face of the Christchurch tragedy has been uplifting. In Queensland people from different faiths have sat together side by side in vigils, united in their determination to rise above fear and reject bigotry and in sympathy with our Muslim brothers and sisters. Through this, the Palaszczuk government remains committed to an inclusive, harmonious and united Queensland. That commitment is demonstrated by our \$3.5 million funding support for asylum seekers and temporary protection visa holders living in our community. That funding was announced in the budget last year and is being delivered through a program supported by Communitify, a great organisation that works with asylum seekers and temporary protection visa holders in our community.

I want to reiterate how important it is that we as a community stand together to celebrate harmony, to celebrate the fact that we are a united and inclusive Queensland and to celebrate the outstanding response that came as a result of the terrible terrorist action that occurred in Christchurch. It was an event that occurred too close to home and, as a consequence, struck home.

When I was at the prayer vigil hosted at the Islamic College of Brisbane last Sunday week, I was really struck by the occasion when I stood with friends—amongst them a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian and myself as a nonbeliever. We stood there together and reflected upon how places of worship have unfortunately become the targets of terror and the targets of the evils of intolerance and hate. I reflected

upon that in the context of having attended the prayer vigil at the Brisbane Synagogue in October last year after we saw the terrible attack on the synagogue in Pittsburgh. Too soon we were brought together as a community to reflect upon the attacks on the mosques in Christchurch. I know everyone in the House has come together to support that community and to support the whole of the Queensland community, particularly our Muslim brothers and sisters.