




Speech By
James Martin

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

Record of Proceedings, 18 November 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Stretton Electorate, Diwali

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (2.34 pm): I rise today to wish Queenslanders and the residents of Stretton and their family members around the world a happy Diwali. Shub Diwali to those celebrating the Festival of Lights. One of the greatest things about my local area is the ability to join in with so many different multicultural celebrations that take place in our community. One of the most enjoyable is Diwali. Diwali is the Festival of Lights. It is a true multicultural celebration that is celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains alike. As Stretton is home to so many people of Indian heritage, it is no surprise that Diwali is one of the main events on our calendar.

Diwali is a time for families and friends to come together and light a lamp known as the diya. It is a chance to remember, even in the midst of darkness, that light will ultimately prevail, that knowledge will defeat ignorance, and compassion will triumph over despair. It is also a reminder that each of us has a part to play in achieving this victory over darkness by dedicating ourselves to service to our friends, family, neighbours and the community. Diwali reminds us it is our commitment to each other to lift each other up that will bring us closer to the brighter future we all seek.

Diwali celebrations this year are particularly meaningful in light of the challenges we face brought on by COVID and in particular Diwali's focus on the triumph of knowledge over ignorance. During the many Diwali celebrations I attended it was a common topic of discussion that anti-vax conspiracy theorists and science deniers were threatening our safety and delaying our path to uniting families, many of whom are overseas. On this point I want to recognise the many residents of Stretton who have been separated from loved ones overseas and, like me, look forward to seeing them as soon as the borders are open in a safe and planned way. I also want to recognise the Australian Indian community for their vocal advocacy and support of vaccination.

Diwali is a lot of fun, and I was pleased to join with many local organisations to share fantastic dancing, singing, dress celebrations, and of course the delicious Indian food—in particular the sweets. They do not put chilli in the sweets, which is very good. My favourite is the jalebi, followed closely by the barfi. We are blessed with many fantastic chefs and cooks in Stretton, and I have taken very seriously one of my official roles as an MP, which seems to be official food tester.

I want to recognise: Neetu Singh and the Haryana Welfare Association for organising the home Diwali celebrations in Stretton; a big thankyou to the Bhardwaz family from Stretton, the DJJS family and the Sharma family from Drewvale for opening up your house and warm welcome; the FICQ and Shyam Das; the Gujarati community of Queensland; Desi Rocks; the Indian Cultural & Sports Club; and Indo TV, which did a fantastic job covering all of the celebrations. Happy Diwali to all members in this place.

(Time expired)