




Speech By
Jason Hunt

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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ADJOURNMENT

Diwali Festival

 **Mr HUNT** (Caloundra—ALP) (6.21 pm): I rise this evening to thank the Sunshine Coast Indian community for an amazing Diwali festival, held at Kings Beach in my electorate on Saturday, 23 October. If you do not have your health, you do not have anything. Because this government got our health response so very right, festivals like Diwali are able to go ahead in all of their glory—and what a genuinely glorious event it was.

Diwali is a festival of light, celebrated by the great majority of our Indian communities. It is a celebration of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. Make no mistake: cultural celebrations like Diwali are a triumph of knowledge over ignorance, and the more festivals of this type we have, the more we push back the encroachment of ignorance and bigotry.

The Sunshine Coast Indian Association festival brought together people from a multitude of cultural backgrounds to ensure that understanding and tolerance were strengthened and that a good time was had by all. The festival also ensures that gods and goddesses like Lakshmi, Ganesh, Vishnu, Krishna and a whole host of others are respected and revered with due deference.

The Sunshine Coast Indian Association executive members have done their community proud—Dr Vas Srinivasan, Arvind Pandit and Anamika Singh. The association's first Diwali was held in a community hall and was attended by barely 15 people. Most recently, the association held a highly successful holy festival, which I also attended. This attracted almost 200 people and was a riot of colour, good cheer and white T-shirts—although they did not remain white for too long. To add to the entertainment value, the association decided to sell very large, monstrously effective water pistols to children and, when coupled with fistfuls of coloured flour, the results were nothing if not vivid. Then on the Saturday just gone well over 1,000 people attended the Diwali festival in the Kings Beach outdoor theatre. The music, the food and the dazzling bright colours all added to the enjoyment.

I take this opportunity to also acknowledge my own very personal connection to the Hindu faith. My son Liam's godmother, Tamil-Selvi Chakrapani, and indeed her entire Chakrapani family have provided a richness to the life of my family that is beyond value. To the entire Chakrapani family here and in Singapore, I say thank you. Thank you for your boundless friendship, your warmth and your hospitality and for expanding the cultural and spiritual understanding of my son, Liam.

To the Sunshine Coast Indian Association, I say bravo on a magnificent Diwali. I look forward to supporting an even bigger festival in 2022.