



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Parramatta Electorate: Mosques

SPEECH

Monday, 31 May 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Owens, Julie, MP

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Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (4.15 pm)—On Saturday I attended the opening of the Parramatta Mosque. There are over 5,000 people of Islamic religion in the Parramatta electorate and some 50,000 in surrounding electorates and yet we have not had a mosque in Parramatta until earlier this year. For some seven years people have been praying at the town hall and every Friday some 700 to 800 people would come from surrounding offices of Sydney's second CBD to the town hall for Friday prayers. It was well and truly a multicultural gathering of people from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The sessions were conducted in English. The same group of people who had organised that Friday prayers for so long at the town hall have now managed to open the first mosque in Parramatta. While attending that opening I was reminded that just last month the state government listed two Australian mosques on the State Heritage Register. One was the Auburn Gallipoli Mosque, just down the road in Auburn, not only because of its unique architecture but also for its connection to our Turkish community, which, in 2008, celebrated its 40th anniversary of settlement in Australia.

Also of great interest was the mosque in Broken Hill, which was built in 1887. This of course was not the first mosque. Credit goes to Moree for its mosque, built in 1882. Quite a few mosques were around in the 1880s. In fact Broken Hill had two, but the one in the north is still standing. It was built like the other mosques of the time of the cameleers, who built the overland telegraph. There is probably no major development in inland Australia from that time in our history that was not made possible by the people who came to Australia from Afghanistan, Turkey and that part of the world that is now known as Pakistan. That particular mosque is intrinsically tied to the experiences and contributions made by people from another world over a century ago.

I had the privilege of meeting some of the descendants of those cameleers, seventh generation Australians, who are extremely proud of the contribution of their ancestors. The Parramatta Mosque, unlike the Auburn Gallipoli Mosque, will probably never be known for its architecture. It is situated in a fairly ordinary looking high-rise building but I hope it will be known for the support it will provide to people of the Islamic faith who work and live around Parramatta. Those of us with Muslim staff know of the importance of the Friday prayer room. In recent years the Islamic community in and around Parramatta, people who reflect the multicultural diversity of the region—people whose families come from, among others, Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, parts of China and Europe, India, Afghanistan, Iraq, Malaysia, Turkey, Lebanon and Egypt—came together to raise \$1 million to contribute to the purchase of the building. A substantial loan still remains. My Muslim community joins other communities which have managed to raise funds to build places of worship—the Buddhist temple in Granville, the Hindu temple in Roseville and the Sikh temple just to the north. I congratulate Neil Kadomi and his team who worked so hard to make this mosque a reality and I wish them all the best.