

MULTICULTURALISM — DIWALI CELEBRATIONS

937. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests:

Could the minister please provide an update on the Diwali celebrations that are happening and the benefits that these types of events bring to our state?

Dr M.D. NAHAN replied:

I thank the member for the question and acknowledge the involvement of the large and growing Indian community in Western Australia. As members know, Diwali—or Deepavali, as it is known by southern Indians—is an annual Indian Festival of Lights, which signifies victory of good over evil. It is celebrated by all Indians across the world. It is an increasingly large multicultural event in Western Australia. For the first time, to mark the official date of Diwali in 2015, which is based on the cycle of the moon, this state Parliament building will be lit up by lights tonight in the traditional Diwali colour of orange. Some years ago, we set up five major culturally and linguistically diverse events every year and Diwali is one of those. We also work very closely with a number of Indian associations and groups to organise a multitude of events across the state during Diwali. The Indian Society of Western Australia, led by its president, Mukesh Jain, is organising six events across the state as an umbrella organisation. Some of those have already been held at Forrest Chase in Perth, Piara Waters, Rockingham, South Perth and Kingsway. On Saturday, the final event will be held at HBF Arena at Joondalup. If last year is the marker—I understand it is going to be a very hot day at 37 degrees—35 000 people attended this event. It will go from noon till 8.00 pm and I encourage everybody to attend.

One of the best festivals we have in terms of CALD communities is the annual Swan Festival of Lights, which was held at the Supreme Court Gardens from Friday, 6 November to Sunday, 8 November this year, and attracted 40 000 to 50 000 people. This festival is now in its eighth year and is run by the Temple of Fine Arts and Annalakshmi on the Swan. The state government supported both of these events. Diwali festivals will also be held in the Cities of Bunbury and Geraldton. As we know, from the longstanding Indian community in Western Australia, particularly over the last 10 years, Indians from all around the world, including Hindus, of course, but also those from Malaysia and Singapore, have been major sources of migrants to the state. They have been amongst the top four for the last 10 years. Their large community constitutes a very large, positive contribution to Western Australia. I wish them happy Diwali.