

DIWALI

Statement by Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests) [2.05 pm]: I am pleased to inform the house that the Western Australian Indian and Hindu communities have commenced festivities celebrating Diwali or the Festival of Lights. Diwali, or Deepavali, in Sanskrit, meaning “row of lamps”, symbolises the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. Diwali this year falls on Wednesday, 7 November, with major community celebrations taking place before and after the date. With its fireworks, cultural entertainment, delicious food stalls and a cheerful family atmosphere, the Festival of Lights is enjoyed by our Indian communities and members of the wider community alike.

The McGowan government is proud to have provided \$123 000 in funding to support many of the large celebrations taking place across the state, including Diwali Mela 2018, organised by the Indian Society of Western Australia; the Swan Festival of Lights, organised by Annalakshmi and Saraswati Mahavidhyalaya; Diwali Mela 2018, organised by the Indian Association of Goldfields WA; the Festival of Lights, organised by the Midwest Multicultural Association; and Bunbury Diwali 2018, organised by the South West Indian Group. These are the major celebrations taking place, not including the many family, business and local community events that will be celebrated all over Western Australia. Parliament house was also lit up in orange from 1 November to mark Diwali. I am delighted to once again co-host the parliamentary Diwali event at Parliament House on Tuesday, 6 November, organised by worldwide Indian community association, BAPS.

Western Australia is fortunate to be home to large and thriving Indian communities, as well as a considerable number of visiting students, tourists and businesspeople from India. As many members of the house will be aware, I am working to establish direct flights between India and Perth, with the aim of growing the number of visitors travelling to Western Australia from India. I recently met with Indian Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Hon Jayant Sinha, and I have made a commitment to increase marketing activity in India and appoint a WA marketing representative to be based in Mumbai.

Diwali is a good time to be celebrating these advances, and I envisage future festivals when our Indian neighbours will be keen to fly direct to Perth to celebrate Diwali Western Australian style. I wish all Western Australian Indian communities happiness, peace and prosperity for Diwali.