



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Blair Electorate: Together for  
Humanity Diversity Workshop**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 23 November 2010**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Tuesday, 23 November 2010  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Neumann, Shayne, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** Yes  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr NEUMANN** (Blair) (10.16 pm)—The famous American author, Mark Twain, in a moment of cynicism, once said:

In religion and politics people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second-hand, and without examination ...

Ipswich and surrounds have not always been known as the most tolerant place. Indeed once, in 1996, infamously, they elected a certain person who caused division, dissension and disharmony. But times have changed and people have moved on, and the community has moved on. On 10 November this year, I held a diversity workshop in my electorate of Blair at the Ipswich Civic Centre. Presenters from the Together for Humanity Foundation—Ronit Baras and Sheikh Ahmad Abu Ghazaleh—demonstrated to local educators and community workers the work they do with school children across Australia. The special guest at the workshop was Rabbi Zalman Kastel, founder and national director of Together for Humanity. Rabbi Zalman Kastel is the son of Hasidic rabbis. He is youth rabbi and Hebrew school principal in the North Shore of Sydney. He worked in Jewish outreach in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ukraine and Australia. He was ordained as a rabbi in New York and completed a graduate diploma in education with the University of New England at Armidale.

Together for Humanity is a not-for-profit multifaith organisation. It was formed in 2002 to promote appreciation and cooperation of all people regardless of their differences. It receives funding from the federal government's Department of Immigration and Citizenship for its workshops and programs, and also from the Queensland government through its Department of Communities. I urge governments at both levels to continue the funding for this wonderful organisation. Their impressive presentation demonstrated how effective programs and workshops are in challenging cultural and religious stereotypes.

Together for Humanity run a variety of courses with presentations, workshops and camps, providing students with rich, in-depth experiences and opportunities to learn about diversity and commonality, and to question the assumptions about identity and build understanding and attitudes for living in harmony. Each program is conducted by at least three facilitators from diverse backgrounds

—Christian, Jewish, Muslim and often Indigenous presenters. The program supports the development of skills and techniques for listening, self-monitoring and reflection. The programs range from one hour to two days and are suitable for primary school children from year 4 through to secondary school students.

Forty or so people attended the workshop in my electorate of Blair. They provided positive feedback on the day. The sort of feedback we received included this from a local area multicultural partnership coordinator: 'Today's experience was very valuable—fantastic. The workshop was interactive and practical. The messages were powerful and very energising.' A teacher at the Islamic College of Brisbane said: 'The workshop was excellent. I loved the interactive components—interacting with other cultures.' In fact, everyone who attended gave positive feedback.

I would like to commend the Together for Humanity Foundation for their commitment to ending some of the assumptions and misconceptions we have about identity and behaviour. I would particularly like to commend the Queensland coordinators and presenters. Together for Humanity's bottom line is: 'Cross-cultural appreciation and cooperation needs to be addressed for the sake of our future.' The message rings true to me, especially as Australia grows in population. As the member for Ryan said, one in seven people live in South-East Queensland. We have a diverse society in Ipswich and surrounds. Differences in belief can cause division. That is why these types of workshops are so important. They are important in our schools to promote appreciation and cooperation of all people regardless of their differences. Challenging cultural and religious stereotypes in the electorate of Blair is important and it is also important elsewhere throughout our community.

Thomas Paine, a famous author, once said:

The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion.

That should be the motto of each and every person in this place, and each and every person across the country. I thank all those people who came to the workshop. I thank the Ipswich City Council for allowing us to run it at the Ipswich Civic Centre. I thank the local media for attending as well, and I commend to

other members the running of these types of workshops in their electorates.