



# NATIONAL WALK FOR VALUES SYDNEY

**Saturday, 12 April 2008 – Sydney**

**Responsible Citizenship**

**Speech given by**

**Ms Tanya Gadiel, MP for Parramatta**

I am honoured to take part in the National Walk for Values 2008 and speak on 'Responsible Citizenship'.

Premier Morris Iemma has asked me to convey his warmest greetings and best wishes to all members of the NSW community who are supporting human values today with their personal participation.

A set of values which cuts across religious divides and philosophical boundaries is at the core of the NSW Government's social policy - based on access and equity, equal opportunity, a fair go for everyone, and responsible citizenship.

Such values are meant to both provide a social framework for fairness and respect in dealings with individuals and require a reasoned and appropriate response from individuals to community expectations and the legal framework.

Responsible citizenship can mean self-development with a view to becoming better prepared to make a positive contribution to society.

This personal contribution may take many forms, from volunteer work and charity activities on behalf of the needy, to excelling in any area of endeavour which ends up benefiting the community at large.

Both of these forms of contribution the Government actively encourages, supports and rewards.

Being responsible citizens can entail a strong overall commitment to do the right thing by others - an attitude that informs every important action or deed in our individual lives.

Responsible citizenship can likewise imply simple deeds, such as a donation, a good and timely gesture, being considered with neighbours, treating the environment with care.

An important example of this civic responsibility is reflected in the many annual celebrations of Harmony Day around the country.

In a country like ours, where people have immigrated from well over 200 countries and brought with them their cultures, languages and religions, Harmony Day celebrations exemplify our day-to-day living in a by-and-large harmonious community.

Opportunities like this inspires us all to appreciate and recognise the values of our diverse communities and to come closer together in festive public activities - where communities show pride in their heritages and contribute from their heritages to the society as a whole.

Responsible citizenship can therefore also be about appreciating the value of our differences and the dynamism of our diversity as a means to contribute towards the common good.

In effect, the values of harmony and unity have been strongly promoted at all levels of society by highlighting the need to respect and acknowledge each other's cultural heritage and religious beliefs.

We have had many opportunities to show to the world that our cultural diversity is perfectly conducive to living and developing happily together for the sake of the whole country.

Responsible citizenship can be likewise enhanced by efforts to establish links and interaction between the many religious faiths professed in our community.

Interfaith dialogue can tangibly contribute to the values of peace and harmony in our culturally diverse society.

Following important initiatives implemented by both the Government and religious organisations over several years, the fact that interaction amongst various faiths is now a growing development is extremely heartening - and especially encouraging in a community as diverse as ours.

This development has the potential to highlight how similar many aspects of our lives are across religious divides, despite the differences some other aspects may show.

Interfaith activities provide people from many different walks of life ideal opportunities to be together and learn from each other as fellow Australians, in a bid to reach a higher level of mutual acceptance and a wider common ground.

As Australians, we may well have some very different beliefs which will not change, but these real differences, coexisting with our similarities, need not and

must not divide us as a nation - because the values of unity and harmony are paramount.

Through accepting the reality of our differences, we Australians will be able to grow ever stronger in our sense of a community with a united common purpose. Yet again, responsible citizenship can also be expressed through developing an appreciation of what it means to be Australians in our present day community.

Australians from all walks of life celebrate every year the coming together of all peoples in our culturally diverse community, from the traditional custodians of the land we all call home, through to the most recent citizens of Australia.

National pride is inspired in recognising the fairness and decency of our people, and respect is paid to history by remembering those fallen in the defence of freedom, and by celebrating with satisfaction our best achievements.

We Australians promote good citizenship, value excellence in performance, encourage high achievement, rejoice at belonging to this great country of ours, and above all -we acknowledge the spirit of service to the community, by publicly recognising our most outstanding members and volunteers.

As Australian citizens, our solemn commitment means pledging loyalty to Australia and its people whose democratic beliefs we share, whose rights and liberties we respect, and whose laws we uphold and obey.

Our cultural diversity has underpinned our economic and social advancement - now, let's make it a vehicle to enhance our personal development towards peace and harmony with our fellow humans, and towards understanding and accepting other people's heritages.

Let's celebrate our becoming part of this democratic, inclusive and welcoming society where there is a place for everyone with respect for other people's languages, heritage and beliefs, as well as freedoms and rights to cherish.

Let's make this Walk for Values a propitious opportunity to enhance and strengthen our social harmony and unity of purpose as a nation -to nurture harmony with our own and our wider environment.

In the face of continuing international turmoil, we all have a role to play and a responsibility to assume in continuing to build a society based on the understanding - that we are culturally and religiously diverse, yet we are united as Australians, that we accept and respect each others' diverse cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs, and that cultural diversity is historically not a new phenomenon in the world.

On behalf of the Premier and the Government of New South Wales, warmly welcome the Walk for Values initiative sponsored by the Sathya Sai Organisation; commend all those citizens whose outstanding contributions have benefited the community at large; and wish everyone walking for values on this occasion a remarkable experience to be repeated.