

26 September 2012

**Submission to the Community Affairs Committee Inquiry on the
*Multicultural Recognition Bill***

The Queensland Council of Social Service (QCROSS) is a peak statewide body with over 650 members working in the social and community sector. For over 50 years QCROSS has worked to eliminate poverty and inequity in Queensland. QCROSS provides a voice for those affected by poverty and inequity, which include some people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

As such, QCROSS has a strong interest in equitable service provision for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. QCROSS welcomes the introduction of the *Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012* as a positive acknowledgement the cultural and linguistic diversity of Queensland and the social, cultural and economic benefits it brings to all Queenslanders.

QCROSS supports the purpose in clause 3 of the Bill:

- a) To recognise the valuable contribution of diverse groups of people in Queensland community
- b) To promote Queensland as a united, harmonious and inclusive community by establishing the charter; and
- c) To ensure government services are responsive to the diversity of the people of Queensland by –
 - i. establishing the council; and
 - ii. providing for the multicultural action plan; and
 - iii. requiring that employees of departments be made aware of the charter and the multicultural policy; and
 - iv. establishing reporting obligations for departments.

QCROSS supports establishment of the Multicultural Advisory Council, and the Multicultural Charter enshrining principles that underpin Queensland's diversity.

QCROSS proposes two amendments to the Bill for the Committee's consideration.

1. Annual reporting by Minister to Cabinet on multicultural action plan

Clause 17 of the Bill provides for 3-year reporting by the Minister to the Legislative Assembly on the implementation of the multicultural action plan. The explanatory notes (page 2) state that "the Bill also provides for reporting obligations to monitor performance against the plan" and that "the Bill has been developed to ensure that Government service delivery better meets the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities." Clause 20 of the Bill provides for annual reporting by each department about progress in implementing the multicultural action plan.

QCROSS recommends annual reporting by the Minister to the Legislative Assembly, to be based on but not limited to the consolidation of departmental annual reporting. Increasing the frequency of reporting by the Minister will provide a more effective mechanism to monitor performance, and will ensure more effective implementation of the multicultural action plan to deliver services that better meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

2. Departmental plans to implement the whole-of-government multicultural action plan

QCOSS welcomes the whole-of-government multicultural action plan, but without articulation of that plan into departmental action plans, it is unclear how effective implementation will be achieved. QCOSS recommends that for clause 21(1) to more effectively fulfil the requirements set out in clause 4(c), it should be amended to state:

(1) A department *must* develop its own action plan to implement the multicultural action plan.

QCOSS welcomes the *Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012* as a significant step to recognise the valuable role of multiculturalism in Queensland. For further information on any of the matters raised in this submission, please contact Linda Parmenter , Senior Manager, Policy on (07) 3004 6900 or lindap@qcooss.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



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