



QPASTT
Queensland Program of
Assistance to Survivors of
Torture and Trauma Inc



QPASTT SUBMISSION TO MULTICULTURAL RECOGNITION BILL 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT) is a Queensland State wide community based service providing counselling, advocacy, support and community development activities for refugee survivors of torture and trauma at an individual, family and community level. The organisation puts a strong emphasis on community engagement through running psycho-educational groups, outreach to regional areas, and outreach to schools, participation in refugee community events and the initiation of community development activities that aid in community healing and recovery from the experience of torture and trauma. QPASTT works with children, young people, adults and families. We work within a strong recovery framework and seek to address the multiple issues of loss that typifies the experience of becoming a refugee and the added issues of psychological recovery from trauma.

QPASTT only works with people from refugee backgrounds and does not work with people from the broader multicultural group, however in the last year this included work with people from over 51 different ethnic groups. QPASTT is interested in seeing the needs of people from refugee backgrounds and in particular those who have experienced torture and/or trauma prior to arrival in Australia included in the development and delivery of government programs and policy responses.

QPASTT currently provides services across Queensland and has a presence in:

- Brisbane;
- Logan/Gold Coast;
- Toowoomba/Gatton;
- Rockhampton;
- Cairns,
- Townsville; and
- Weipa.

QPASTT welcomes the introduction of the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012 and sees the introduction of such a Bill as a commitment to strengthening multicultural policy. We would like to thank the Health and Community Services committee for the opportunity to provide a submission on the Bill.

COMMENTS

QPASTT would like to make comment on specific items in the Bill and the attached Explanatory Notes:

- We support the development of Multicultural Action Plans; however this needs to be backed up by strong provisions for monitoring, evaluation and reporting. While 3 year Action Plans are supported, we would suggest that annual monitoring and reporting needs to occur.
- Our experience to date would be consistent with the areas noted for improvement in the Explanatory Notes. In particular we would agree that it is important that Departments are clear on who is covered by such a policy and why this target group may be worthy of consideration as a separate target group in the planning and delivery of services;
- There is a critical need for the development and capturing of appropriate data in relation to this target group. In particular, the capturing of data around ethnicity rather than “overseas born” or country of birth data. The availability of data based only on overseas born is not always useful in the design and delivery of services. It gives inaccurate information in relation to backgrounds and hides the needs of some groups such as people from refugee backgrounds;
- There is a difference in groups within the broad coverage of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. We note that the bill and attached notes do not make any reference to the needs of new and emerging communities. The issues faced by and the needs of new and emerging communities are quite different to those of more established communities. This is one of the reasons of suggesting that data in relation to ethnicity be included in the collection of data;
- There is a need for the Council itself to be representative of people from new and emerging communities as well as more established communities;
- We would like to suggest that within the Bill, the definition of a “designated person” includes: a culturally sensitive person or a person with an understanding of culturally diverse communities.
- We would suggest that the Bill or associated notes or regulations include not just a reference to the need for culturally appropriate services but also a commitment to and mechanisms for ensuring access to services through the availability, funding and use of interpreters. This is a current gap in service delivery in Queensland and is exacerbated through funding availability being rolled into more general funding provisions. In some Department’s interpreter funding is allocated within a general pool of funding for expenditure on client priorities. This means that the funding is almost always expended on other priorities and not available in practice for the use of interpreters. This could be covered by giving consideration to the inclusion of a universal right to services by all Queenslanders via the effective communication between service providers and clients who may need language assistance;
- We would like to suggest that all Departments are tied to ensuring a commitment to culturally competent practices and the embedding of these into policy, program design and service delivery. This commitment should then be passed onto services funded by

the Queensland Government. At present our Queensland Government funding contracts require us to provide appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (despite us being funded specially not to work with this target group) but have no requirement to provide appropriate services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

SUMMARY

The broad content and intent of the draft Bill is supported, however it is suggested that consideration be given to ensuring that the legislation upholds and protects the universal right to services for all Queenslanders regardless of their cultural background and that there is an onus on all Departments to ensure this occurs.

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