



Mental Health in Multicultural Australia's (MHiMA) submission to:

Queensland Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012

About MHiMA

MHiMA is a national project currently funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. MHiMA's mission is to build capacity and to support inclusion. Underpinning this mission is MHiMA's vision of an open and inclusive society committed to human rights and diversity in which everyone requiring mental health services is able to access culturally responsive services equitably regardless of CALD background.

MHiMA's mission expresses our intent for communities and health service providers to address the mental health needs of Australia's immigrant and refugee population in a culturally inclusive and responsive manner. MHiMA is committed to achieve this mission by:

- Providing a national focus on issues relevant to mental health and suicide prevention for people from CALD backgrounds by offering advice and support to government and non-government providers and service users
- Supporting primary health care professionals, including general practitioners and allied health practitioners, to address the mental health needs of consumers from CALD backgrounds and their carers
- Supporting development of mental health services that are culturally responsive, evidence-based and recovery-oriented
- Working to promote effective and culturally responsive services that are capable of meeting the diverse needs of the Australian population across the lifespan
- Engaging with relevant stakeholders in every state and territory by developing effective and respectful collaborations that are of mutual benefit and that advance our common objectives by adopting a flexible approach that is responsive to issues arising in a rapidly changing environment

MHiMA Position on Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012

- MHiMA welcomes the concept of establishing a Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012 in Queensland and notes that such an approach is in place in some of the other jurisdictions in Australia.
- MHiMA supports the Bill's objectives which are:
 - to recognise the diversity of the people of Queensland and the valuable contribution of diverse groups to the Queensland community;
 - to promote Queensland as a united, harmonious and inclusive community by establishing the multicultural charter; and
 - to ensure government services are responsive to the diversity of the people of Queensland
- However, MHiMA believes the objectives of the Bill should be broadened and require further development in order for it to be more practically meaningful and effective in ensuring improved outcomes for multicultural communities accessing civic, employment and skills development opportunities; and access to public and private services such as mental health services.
- MHiMA is concerned that if the Bill proceeds in its current form, its utility will be limited to a mere expression of intent with little real ability to achieve tangible improvements in improving public or private sector service access to newly arrived communities or tackling inequity, disadvantage and discrimination faced by long term settled communities. MHiMA is also concerned about there not being a dedicated Commission as is the case in other jurisdictions in Australia that have put in place multicultural legislation.
- Noting that a Commission structure will not be available in the current form of this Bill, MHiMA would seek consideration of there being provision to seek expert advice to support the work of the proposed advisory council.
- MHiMA notes that there will be requirements to produce an action plan, reporting arrangements and establishing a council. However, there appear to be no statutory powers embedded that make reporting mandatory, nor do there appear to be any clear powers to investigate or require organisations to put in place remedial measures to ensure services meet the need of diverse multicultural communities.

- Although MHiMA would not be seeking to add burdensome reporting requirements, we believe that before this Bill is progressed further it requires greater consideration in relation to how it fits with other bodies in Queensland as well as nationally in advancing multiculturalism. For example integration and linkage with current statutory requirements and agencies at state level to ensure a difference is made to multicultural communities' experience of accessing opportunities and services by embedding and strengthening what currently exists. The Anti Discrimination Commission Queensland and Health Quality & Complaints Commission would be key statutory bodies with which the Bill could be linked to ensure that mechanisms are in place which support the Bill to make a real difference in tackling inequality and ensuring inclusion of Queenslanders from all of its diverse multicultural communities.

Thank you. We look forward to reading the outcomes of the Inquiry.

MHiMA Contact Details:

Executive Officer: Mr. Hamza Vayani

Tel: 1300 136 289

Email: exec@mhima.org.au

Postal Address: P O Box 6623, Upper Mt Gravatt,
QLD, 4122

Address: 519 Kessels Rd, Macgregor,
QLD, 4109

Website: www.mhima.org.au