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13 MAR 2009

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND  
ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW  
COMMITTEE



**Queensland  
Government**

Department of  
**Communities**

Mr Stephen Finnimore  
Research Director  
Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

12 March 2009

Dear Mr Finnimore

I refer to a letter from Mrs Dianne Reilly MP, Chair of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee of 12 February 2009 concerning a preamble for the Queensland Constitution.

Multicultural Affairs Queensland is supportive of a preamble which recognises the cultural diversity of our State. However, any reference to cultural diversity in the preamble should be consistent with the Queensland Government Multicultural Policy. *Multicultural Queensland – making a world of difference* (the Policy), recognises Queensland's cultural diversity and provides a blueprint for managing this diversity. The Policy can be accessed on the Multicultural Affairs Queensland website [www.multicultural.qld.gov.au](http://www.multicultural.qld.gov.au).

Please find attached comments on some of the issues raised in the Committee's Issues Paper.

Given the current Caretaker period it is expected that any further development of a preamble would await the outcome of the upcoming Queensland election. It is recommended that any further work include extensive community consultation including culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

If you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter, please contact  
Acting Principal Policy Officer, Multicultural Affairs Queensland

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Garry Page', written over a horizontal line.

Garry Page  
Executive Director  
Multicultural Affairs Queensland

Enc

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**Response to the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee's  
Issues Paper on a Preamble for the Queensland Constitution  
February 2009**

**Issue 2.3: Should the preamble refer to God and, if so, how?**

Although the 2006 Census indicates that the majority of Queenslanders identify themselves as Christian, the reality is that Queenslanders practise over 100 religious beliefs. A specific reference to God in the preamble could exclude particular groups in our society. Rather than referring to a particular religion, it would be more inclusive to recognise the diversity of beliefs and spirituality within the Queensland community.

**Issue 2.4: Should the preamble recognise cultural diversity and, if so, how?**

Queensland is home to more than 200 cultures, and Queenslanders speak over 220 languages. This diversity is one of our greatest strengths and should be recognised in the preamble.

Multicultural Affairs Queensland's submission to the previous inquiry into a possible preamble in 2004 is still relevant, with a minor change:

*"We declare that we respect the equality of all persons under the law, regardless of class, faith, gender, origin, **culture** or race, and **value** the contribution they make to the State of Queensland."*

**Issue: 2.5: Should the preamble recognise the rule of law and, if so, how?**

The Queensland Government Multicultural Policy promotes multiculturalism in which all Queenslanders have an overriding commitment to Australian and Queensland laws. Recognising the rule of law in the preamble would therefore be consistent with the Queensland Government Multicultural Policy.

**Issue 2.6: Should the preamble refer to 'equality' and, if so, how?**

One of the values underpinning the Queensland Government Multicultural Policy is equality including equitable access to services and equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all Queenslanders to participate in, contribute to and benefit from all aspects of social life. Multicultural Affairs Queensland agrees that the preamble should include reference to equality and agrees with the previously proposed wording above in 2.4.

**Issue 2.9: Should the preamble contain any other elements and, if so, what should they be?**

There are a number of other elements suggested in the issues paper which could be included in the preamble. The list includes the word 'tolerance'. This word can be controversial with some groups concerned that it indicates that different cultural groups are tolerated rather than accepted as equal members of the community.

The list also includes 'the English language'. English is the official language of Australia, and therefore Queensland, and could be recognised in the preamble. As mentioned above Queenslanders speak over 220 languages and 13.6% of Queenslanders speak a language other than English at home. Proficiency in English varies depending on length of time in Australia, country of origin and how individuals arrived in Australia (i.e. refugees are likely to have less proficiency in English than migrants arriving under the skilled migration stream). Any mention of language in the preamble should take into consideration the linguistic diversity of the State.