

No 124



Queensland
Government

Please quote: 57135/SC02/MAQ

Department of the
Premier and Cabinet

Dr Lesley Clark MP
Chair
Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Dr Clark

Thank you for inviting Multicultural Affairs Queensland (MAQ) to make a submission on the question of a preamble for the Queensland Constitution.

Should a plebiscite determine that the Queensland Constitution is to contain a preamble, it would be important that it affirm the value of cultural diversity. In that regard, MAQ supports the Queensland Constitutional Review Commission's draft preamble subject to the word 'recognise' being replaced with the word 'value' to read:

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

However, MAQ's view on the wording should not be considered as representative of the multicultural sector, and ethnic communities should be independently consulted.

MAQ considers that a preamble should recognise the unique status of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. The wording of such recognition should be negotiated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

MAQ supports including a reference to 'equality' in a preamble.

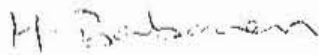
I am also forwarding for your consideration a copy (enclosed) of comments from staff of the Multicultural Development Association and Claire Cottone, Multicultural Development Officer at the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland. MAQ received these in response to a *limited* consultation with key community agencies it funds. Should you have any queries regarding these comments, please contact the Multicultural Development Association or Claire Cottone directly.

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MAQ also requested the agencies to publicise the inquiry through their networks; however, MAQ is concerned that the inquiry will not have had sufficient exposure within the multicultural sector. In that regard, MAQ notes that the current call for submissions is in the first stage of the review process and urges the Committee to widen the demographic reach of its consultative dialogue.

If you have any queries regarding the submission please contact Silvia Cosier on 3244 5316 or email Silvia.Cosier@premiers.qld.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Harriyet Babacan
Executive Director
Community Outcomes

18 August 2004: email from Susan Shehata, Grant Access Worker, Multicultural Development Association

We have a little feedback quickly gathered today from staff at the Multicultural Development Association regarding the proposed preamble for the Qld Constitution- just on the "widely-held values" and in particular the second paragraph (after the one about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders).

These opinions are not those of MDA but of the individual staff. Some of these are noted below:

- Instead of the word "race it would be better to put "Culture"
- Put "We recognise the contribution of immigrants as they have enriched our Australian culture
- "We promote Australia's multiculturalism or cultural diversity as a dynamic, unifying and positive energy in our society
- Maybe something along the lines of.....and recognize the contribution they make to this multicultural state.
- The second paragraph should include 'disability'.
- The third - '...and protect'.
- The state of QLD values diversity and harmony. (second paragraph)

and lastly one staff person put a variety of comments and unfortunately I have run out of time to analyse it:

- Multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-religious
- Use the words multi culturalism, diversity, value difference
- Paragraph 2: We declare that we respect (add the words AND ACCEPT)
- Paragraph. 2:regardless of class, faith, gender, origin or race.....(add the word VALUES)
- Paragraph 2:and recognize the contribution.....(add the word AND BELIEFS)
- Under the last paragraph statement: we also accept the multicultural make up nature of our nation; and acknowledge all other people's differences as unipe to our country. We value diversity, multi ethnicities, all religions, beliefs, values and accept they are a part of our nation.
- (personal statement) this is good! I agree with it but yes we should also acknowledge all other ethnicities who shared this county with us. We declare that we value each person's uniqueness. We are a multicultural county.

I hope there is something of use there!

Susan Shehata
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24 August 2004: email from Claire Cottone

Thanks for the opportunity to participate in this consultation. I know I am a bit later than requested so I'll keep it brief.

I couldn't get the feedback form to work for me so I just thought I'd put a few thoughts in an email. There are a couple of points about which I feel strongly.

Firstly I believe that the preamble must refer to the sovereignty of Aboriginal traditional owners and their continuing relationship with and custodianship of the land.

Even better would be an express acknowledgement that Aboriginal people were forcibly dispossessed of their land and that sovereignty was never passed over to the British colonisers. No treaty was ever negotiated or signed.

Secondly, a reference to "Almighty God" should not be inconsistent with an acknowledgment of Queensland's cultural diversity - that is to say, there are many Queenslanders with a wide range of spiritual and religious beliefs and I believe that it would be absurd to refer to one "almighty god" with this in mind. I think it would also be absurd to use this phrase out of convention. What percentage of Queenslanders believe in one 'Almighty God' and live according to this belief?

Any reference to cultural diversity should acknowledge Aboriginal culture as the primary culture of the land and therefore cultural diversity includes Anglo-Celtic culture.

Thanks for your time

Regards,
Claire

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