



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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MULTICULTURALISM

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (11.42 a.m.): Today I would like to present to the Parliament a definitive statement about the progress to date of the Multicultural Queensland Policy. When in Opposition, we said that there had to be a new direction in multicultural affairs in this State. Within a few weeks of Government, a new Multicultural Queensland Policy had been developed and launched by the Premier in August at the Multicultural Community Leaders Forum held in Brisbane.

The new policy is about access. All Queenslanders should enjoy equitable access to services and programs. It is about participation. All Queenslanders should enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities to participate in, contribute to and benefit from all aspects of life in Queensland. It is about cohesion. All Queenslanders should share responsibility for the continuing development of Queensland as a cohesive, harmonious society.

The State Budget identifies a total budget allocation to Multicultural Affairs Queensland of \$3,793,000 for the financial year 1998-99. This includes an allocation for the management of the Multicultural Affairs Queensland program and the Yungaba administration program. A total of \$1,443,000 has been allocated to the Multicultural Affairs Queensland program, which is made up of a local area multicultural partnership, and that is some \$525,000—and I will expand on that program in a later speech—multicultural assistance programs, some \$445,000; and the ethnic school program of some \$130,000. Other grants include the International Year of Older Persons program, \$150,000; the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters subsidy, \$64,000; Commonwealth/State joint research, \$9,000; the Ethnic Community Council of Queensland, a grant of \$100,000; and the Arts Council, \$20,000. The remainder is allocated to: Yungaba, \$581,247; and the Office of Multicultural Affairs Queensland \$1,767,706.

I have established the interdepartmental committee on multicultural affairs, chaired by the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The interdepartmental committee, which has already met, works to ensure consistency in implementation of the principles and strategies of the Multicultural Queensland Policy across Government. Of particular importance to me will be what agencies deliver for regional multicultural Queensland. Through working parties chaired by relevant portfolio representatives, the committee also develops supporting strategies including those on multicultural opportunities in trade, investment and business. With this in mind, the Government is calling together leading business people from the Queensland multicultural community to meet and work through a range of ideas and initiatives which can lead to more jobs for Queenslanders.

I mentioned before Government agencies. The new policy includes the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society, which has been endorsed by this Government and by Ministers at the Commonwealth, State and Territory levels and by local government leaders. Government service providers in Queensland need to have a reporting mechanism in place which ensures they are accountable for implementing the policy, for example, on an annual basis reporting on what and how they have achieved under this policy. The Office of Multicultural Affairs Queensland—the Public Service—has been given more strategic responsibility by me to work with all Government agencies.

MAQ, better known as Multicultural Affairs Queensland, will assist these agencies to implement the new policy and monitor other agencies. Under the policy, all Government agencies are expected by this Government to provide the necessary resources from their own budgets to meet the following core principles of this policy. One of the keys if not the key aspect of the policy is community consultation. Since I became the Parliamentary Secretary with carriage of Multicultural Affairs for the Government, I

have assumed an inclusive approach. By this I mean that I have had an open-door policy to meet with both individuals and community groups in relation to what the policy covers and, for that matter, what the policy does not cover.

Can I just share with you, Mr Deputy Speaker, some of my experiences to date such as the day three community women put to me that they wanted this Government to ensure that equitable outcomes needed to be a focus for a multicultural Queensland and that issues relating to settlement of newly arrived migrants and racism be addressed. Moreover, they said that the Government, communities and service providers should develop culturally inclusive programs and services to ensure that newly arrived immigrants are taken into the fold of our society and are not subjected to racism or discriminated against. While visiting a learning support facility for newly arrived immigrant students, the point was made to me that racism also exists within the multicultural community and that collectively we have to help the multicultural community to deal with this particular aspect of intraracism.

Another perspective I see as critically important to the new policy is that of including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community as part of the Queensland multicultural fraternity. Clearly, though, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are special to this place. With my colleague the Honourable the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, I want to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait people feel that they can be part of multicultural Queensland and share the fruits of a Multicultural Queensland Policy. As the Premier indicated at the Multicultural Community Leaders Forum in August, the Government is committed to doing something about racial vilification. To this end, work is well under way to either amend legislation under the current Anti-Discrimination Act or possibly write new legislation for the Parliament. I will keep honourable members informed of this matter as it progresses.

Let me say that since June I have met with 91 delegations, most of which have come from the multicultural community, including those I met with at Community Cabinet sessions around the State. I am also well into a schedule of meetings with a number of lord mayors about how the policy will assist local government authorities to access funds under the Local Area Multicultural Partnership Program of this policy. The LAMP Program implements the major strategic component of the cultural diversity support strategy.

I am also in the process of inviting key multicultural community representatives to work with me in a multicultural task force to monitor the implementation of the Multicultural Queensland Policy. This task force would complement the work done by the interdepartmental committee on multicultural affairs. I am looking to the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland to assume a far more comprehensive leadership role under this policy.

There are specific areas of need under the policy which need to be addressed. These include: support for new and emerging multicultural groups to access legal and justice services, health, education, housing, training and employment and other areas; and recognition of the special needs of women from diverse backgrounds. I believe that the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, together with other lead multicultural community organisations, can assist to build the capacity of communities to more participate in the new policy. Through the provision of funding under the policy, the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland can also help the Government to assist these new and emerging organisations to actively participate in the consultation and planning that Government agencies, including local government, undertake to improve their service delivery capacity.

In conclusion, I have to say that, like the Premier, I am fully committed to multiculturalism. We have to send a clear signal to all Queenslanders—and to all Australians, for that matter—and overseas that our State is about strength in cultural diversity. Significantly, the multicultural community throughout Queensland has warmly received the new Multicultural Queensland Policy, as I hope all members of this Parliament have done.
