



Speech by

## GORDON NUTTALL

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Hansard 20 July 1999

### MULTICULTURALISM

**Mr NUTTALL** (Sandgate—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): Clearly, multiculturalism in this State is alive and well if the response to Community Cabinet meetings and my deputations at these meetings are any indication. For example, at the recent Community Cabinet in the western suburbs of Brisbane, most of the deputations that were received came from a wide range of ethnic communities throughout Brisbane. These communities raised issues from English comprehension in State schools for students from non-English-speaking backgrounds to employment issues, to issues regarding access to interpreters, support for refugees and asylum seekers, issues regarding health, and issues regarding accommodation and land.

So as to gauge how Queensland Government departments are travelling against the Multicultural Queensland Policy, the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet wrote to all directors-general on 15 June of this year asking them to contribute to the inaugural report to the Premier on multicultural affairs. The report will document the significant achievements of Queensland Government departments in implementing the Multicultural Queensland Policy. Information about the Government's expenditure on programs and services from a multicultural and ethnic perspective is also required. Departmental responses were due to be forwarded and handed in by 16 July 1999. The Director-General of the Premier's Department, who chairs the interdepartmental committee, has also established a number of working groups under the policy to look at such things as community relations, funding priorities and reporting, immigration and Australian South Sea Islander issues.

I now turn to the current round of grants that are available under the policy. Funding under this Government's \$580,000 Multicultural Assistance Program, aimed at building stronger community links, has opened for applications. Advertisements appeared in the Courier-Mail and regional newspapers on Saturday, 3 July 1999. Information has also been sent to the many hundreds of ethnic community organisations registered on the database maintained by the Office of Multicultural Affairs Queensland in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The Multicultural Assistance Program funding is part of a \$2.1m Cultural Diversity Support Program for the 1999-2000 financial year, which is a key component of the Government's Multicultural Queensland Policy. The current Multicultural Assistance Program round will target projects focusing on the community development, community relations and a continuation of the International Year of Older Persons initiatives. The aim of the Multicultural Assistance Program is to assist community organisations to undertake projects that promote understanding and acceptance of multiculturalism in this great State. Activities likely to be funded are those that address community issues and needs in a way which is culturally appropriate, innovative and promotes cooperation across community groups.

As we know, Queensland has a diverse population comprising more than 120 different ethnic backgrounds. This cultural background is part of our everyday lives and contributes to Queensland's unique character. The policy aims to build understanding among different cultural groups and broaden our understanding of our cultural heritage. In summary, the funds will go to the following: to community development, \$130,000; to community relations, \$300,000; to the International Year of Older Persons, \$150,000; to community workers, \$200,000; to the Local Area Multicultural Partnership Program with

regional councils, \$920,000; ethnic schools grants, \$150,000; research, \$100,000; and special projects, \$200,000.

In relation to the special projects, these are Government priorities which have been identified as demonstrated needs during the community consultation process which has been undertaken by the Office of Multicultural Affairs Queensland over the last few months throughout this State. These include: the Australian South Sea Islanders; employment; access by communities to funding programs; and the National Conference on Multiculturalism to be held in Brisbane, which will be co-sponsored by the Premier and the Lord Mayor of Brisbane.

All incorporated bodies and organisations sponsored by incorporated bodies can apply for Multicultural Assistance Program grants, which close on 31 August of this year. Guidelines and applications for the programs are now available. I am pleased to announce that the Office of Multicultural Affairs Queensland is organising workshops throughout the State from 19 July to 10 August to assist ethnic communities to prepare their grant applications. This is a first, and these workshops will be held in various locations, as I said, throughout the State. Essentially, the workshops will inform organisations about the various types of grants available from State Government agencies, including those under the Multicultural Queensland Policy. They will enhance the ability to prepare an application for Government funds, including supporting materials which must be enclosed with an application and foster an improved ability to plan, develop and evaluate a project which could be funded under the Multicultural Assistance Program. I encourage honourable members to talk to the ethnic communities in their electorates.

**Mr Mickel:** I do all the time. Gee, they're grateful for the position you gave them in Logan City, too. They sang your praises.

**Mr NUTTALL:** I thank the honourable member for that. As I said, we have written to all the ethnic community groups throughout the State about the grants. It is very important that they avail themselves of the opportunity to attend the workshops to help them prepare their applications.

As a Government, we are in touch with the community. Our ongoing Community Cabinet meetings, our ministerial regional community forums and the very nature of the Labor Party as a grassroots entity keep us in touch with ordinary people. We as a Government are in the business of listening to those who have alternative views. When we have to, we challenge the conventional wisdom on issues, and sometimes this approach is unpopular. We as a Government believe that we do show leadership on the tough issues.

We have come a long way in the past 12 months in relation to multiculturalism and in relation to the broader ethnic communities throughout this great State. Multiculturalism in this State exists within the structures and the principles of our Australian society. It exists within the rule of law. It exists within the parliamentary democracy. It exists within the freedom of speech and religion, within English as the national language, and equality of the sexes. It is in this framework that we, as a Government, promote universal ideas of human-based mutual respect, cooperation and a fair go for all for those in our multicultural communities.

As we have travelled throughout the State and listened to the needs of our ethnic communities, we have endeavoured as much as possible to proceed with their views, and where we have been able to we have endeavoured in every way to assist them with their needs. Our ethnic communities in this great State continue to grow. We encourage that. We believe that for us as Queenslanders multiculturalism is the way forward.

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