



Speech by

GORDON NUTTALL

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Hansard 30 November 1999

MULTICULTURAL QUEENSLAND POLICY

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (12.20 p.m.): Today I would like to inform my parliamentary colleagues about the first annual report on the implementation of the Multicultural Queensland Policy submitted to the Premier in October 1999 by Multicultural Affairs Queensland, Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Members will be receiving this report in the mail shortly. I suggest to them that it is very good reading, and I encourage them to take the time and the opportunity to read it.

Mr Gibbs: Can I have five or six copies?

Mr NUTTALL: I will be only too pleased to provide them to the Minister, and he can give them to his friends to read over the Christmas break.

In August 1998, the Government launched the Multicultural Queensland Policy. The policy provides a central coordination framework for Government departments to manage Queensland's great diversity. Since the launch of the policy, Queensland Government agencies have individually or collectively instigated various policies and strategies to begin the Multicultural Queensland Policy implementation, which is putting policy into practice.

Multicultural Affairs Queensland, as the central coordinating agency within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, has also undertaken extensive promotion of the policy across the public sector and established implementation mechanisms, such as servicing the Interdepartmental Committee on Multicultural Affairs. As an integral part of the implementation of the MQP, Queensland Government agencies are required to report on their performance in implementing the policy in their annual reports.

The report to the Premier provides a detailed account of what Queensland Government agencies have done and achieved in 1998-99 in addressing multicultural issues and addressing policy programs and services within their respective departments so that they meet the three basic principles of the policy, that is, access, participation and cohesion. The report includes input from 22 Government agencies. MAQ has also reported on its special initiatives and strategies as the lead agency in multicultural affairs. I am happy to highlight some of the major items here for the attention of all honourable members.

As I mentioned, an Interdepartmental Committee on Multicultural Affairs, which is chaired by the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, was set up by Cabinet to drive and coordinate the Government's policy in relation to multicultural affairs. The interdepartmental committee, through its working groups on different functional areas, has significantly progressed a wide range of tasks, including the development of a community relations plan which is a flexible blueprint designed to improve the community relations environment in Queensland. These working groups are: the working group on Australian South Sea Islander communities; the working group on immigration; and the working group on the MQP implementation.

In the financial year 1998-99, which the report covers, a budget of \$1.15m was allocated for grants programs under the policy's Cultural Diversity Support Strategy. These funds were primarily being used for two major strategies. The first is the Multicultural Assistance Program. This program provides assistance to community relations projects that promote and advance multiculturalism in this State, including multicultural festivals, seminars, workshops, conferences and the dissemination of information on multiculturalism and community development projects that improve organisational support within

ethnic community organisations. The program also provides recurrent funding to assist peak community organisations to fulfil their advocacy and community building roles for the benefit of ethnic groups and the promotion of multiculturalism in Queensland. \$750,000 was allocated to fund MAP projects. The allocation has increased to \$1.28m for the current financial year.

The second major strategy funded is the Local Area Multicultural Partnership Program, better known as the LAMP Program. This program provides funding to local governments to employ workers to support communities to build positive community relations and develop strategies to facilitate equal access to Government services. The LAMP allocation for the year 1998-99 was \$400,000 for six local governments, namely, Brisbane, Hervey Bay, Ipswich, Cairns, Caboolture and, of course, Mackay, as well as the Local Government Association of Queensland. The allocation was increased to \$870,000 in this current financial year. In the current budget, eight additional local governments, including Gladstone, the Gold Coast, Logan, Johnstone, Maroochy, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Townsville, will also receive funding under the LAMP Program, which will bring the total to 14 councils across Queensland.

As all honourable members may be aware, the Government has also made considerable efforts to listen to the community. Community Cabinet meetings were held in 14 locations throughout Queensland, and 85 delegations were received from ethnic communities. Members of ethnic communities also contributed strongly to regional community forums and Multicultural Affairs Queensland's own Statewide consultation, which was held in 11 centres across Queensland. These consultations received overwhelming and positive responses from communities and identified a wide range of issues that needed to be addressed. A summary of the issues is included in the report.

Government agencies have actively implemented the MQP either through special initiatives within their departments or the incorporation of the MQP principles into their strategic and corporate planning. Some of the highlights include Queensland education. Education Queensland has implemented key programs and strategies, including the Community Languages Program and the Ethnic Schools Program, which now receives funds of over \$130,000 from the Government. This is the first time the Queensland Government has provided direct funding to support this worthy program. There is also the English as a Second Language Program and the combating racism package.

In terms of Queensland Health— Queensland Health has developed service agreements between corporate office and health service districts throughout Queensland which now require these districts to report on: the development of a strategy for implementation of the MQP and the Queensland Language Services Policy; the number of staff attending cross-cultural awareness training; and the number of staff who are skilled to provide mental health services to people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Service agreements with non-Government health-related service providers now include requirements that organisations operate in accordance with the Charter for Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society. In addition, Queensland Health is developing its own multicultural policy and Language Services Policy, and these will be modelled on MQP.

The Queensland Police Service has implemented a number of projects to improve services to the diverse population. They include: the development of the You, the Law and Society information package; a review of interpreter service provisions and usage; the Queensland Police Ethnic Youth Partnership; reconciliation activities; and the Living in Harmony project.

The Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations initiated a community training identification project to develop training plans with ethnic communities. Plans are being developed on the Gold Coast, in north Queensland and in far-north Queensland. The department has developed the Government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative to provide better access to employment opportunities for people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The nature, cause and solutions to long-term unemployment in ethnic communities is to be investigated in partnership with Multicultural Affairs Queensland and the Workforce Strategy Unit. The department also has been working with outworkers, predominantly from Vietnamese, Chinese and Cambodian backgrounds, to ensure that they have access to relevant award and legislative provisions.

Arts Queensland has developed its own multicultural arts policy, called the Cultural Diversity and the Arts Policy. MQP has been linked to the Arts Queensland 1999-2003 strategic plan. In 1999-2000, Arts Queensland will offer cross-cultural training for staff as part of the implementation of the MQP. Information about its programs in languages other than English will be published to increase access for clients from diverse backgrounds.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is only a short part of my speech left, and I seek leave to have it incorporated in Hansard.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): We would almost be prepared to grant the member an extension of time.

Leave granted.

Department of Families, Youth and Community Care

The Department's Child Care Access and Equity Strategy included the following activities in 1998-1999—

Developed new resources to support communication between families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and child care services.

Child care service staff undertook training provided by the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT).

The Department and MAQ jointly fund the Non-English Speaking Background Youth Issues Network Project conducted by the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland.

The Report highlights the priorities for future work under the Policy. These are:

- ensuring consistent implementation of the Policy across Government agencies;
- more resources for multicultural activities and community advocacy;
- improving access to grants funding, especially in regional Queensland;
- improved access to appropriately delivered services; improved community relations;
- employment; and
- productive diversity.

In addition the Government will pay particular attention to the needs of the Australian South Sea Islander community. On 21 September 1999 the Premier announced the Government's intention to formally recognise the Community as a distinct cultural group. Consultations are currently underway on an appropriate Recognition Statement.

Mr Speaker, what I have highlighted are only some of the initiatives being taken in support of this important Government Policy. I strongly recommend to my Parliamentary colleagues that they read the full Report as it reflects the Government's continued commitment to implementing multiculturalism and provides a detailed account of the major achievements the Government has made in the last year as well as the future directions on further development of multiculturalism in Queensland.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the high level of professionalism and commitment demonstrated through this Report by MAQ Executive Director and staff as well as Departmental representatives on the IDC, the Working Groups and all those involved in implementing the Policy at the service level.

Mr NUTTALL: I commend the report to the House.
