



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard 14 October 2003

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (12.23 p.m.): Multiculturalism is a way of managing cultural diversity to provide social and economic benefits for all Queenslanders. The Queensland government is committed to multiculturalism in all its facets through its multicultural Queensland policy. Multiculturalism involves the concept of a fair go, equity and social cohesion. It also includes productive diversity, which is about the economic benefits of diversity or the business dividends.

In late 2002 the Premier approved targeted consultation with business and industry on productive diversity. Multicultural Affairs Queensland and the Department of State Development conducted consultations with business to develop a suite of initiatives to promote the business angle of multiculturalism and to facilitate the use of productive diversity to benefit Queensland businesses. Over 100 representatives of business and industry groups throughout Queensland were involved in the consultations, including members of the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council, government and community representatives.

It was found that the term 'productive diversity' was not well recognised. However, the concept was often understood and some businesses could produce examples of how they used productive diversity to improve their bottom line. That is what it is all about: improving the bottom line. Many businesses were keen to find out how they could better use diversity to improve business results. However, they did not want to be told what to do by government. Businesses generally believed that more should be done to promote practical examples of how success could be achieved through using cultural diversity.

The results of these consultations is a kit featuring case studies of productive diversity in action in Queensland. The kit is called 'Doing business smarter—Queensland's multicultural advantage'. The case studies highlight how to make economic use of multiculturalism. Multicultural Affairs Queensland, in conjunction with the Department of State Development, recently launched this excellent initiative which is aimed at making the most of Queensland's vast culturally diverse population. This initiative is about maximising our multicultural advantage, using language skills, know-how, networks, experience and cultural knowledge to achieve business opportunity.

Productive diversity, while not considered the main driver of business, is considered an accelerator to opportunistic businesses or organisations, and it can produce real results. We must encourage diversity. We are already having great success in attracting business migrants from other countries to set up shop in Queensland but we must continue to capitalise on the diversity already here. Queensland is already blazing a trail attracting business people from other countries and cultures.

Skilled migration continues to grow. Queensland received 4,322 skilled settler arrivals in 2000-01. These are migrants arriving to establish a business and migrants sponsored by employers to fill skills shortages. This is 11 per cent of the total business and skilled migrants coming to Australia. The skilled migration program benefits the state by improving and enhancing economic development through new technology, export markets, manufacturing, business and employment. Research indicates that business migrants appear to have higher value exports than their Australian counterparts, and business migrant manufacturers performed considerably

better than comparable non-migrant manufacturers. Also, small companies belonging to business migrants have employed a slightly higher number of employees on average than Australian firms.

Our Smart State boasts a rich diversity of people from over 160 different cultural backgrounds. The 2001 Australian Bureau of Statistics census reported that 22.3 per cent of the Queensland population was born overseas and almost seven per cent of Queenslanders speak a language other than English at home. With this in mind, the productive diversity kits which feature case studies from 13 Queensland businesses range from small businesses to larger Queensland organisations and institutions. For example, productive diversity in the workplace or business can be used in relation to export development and importing; domestic and international marketing and supply chains; improving customer service; workplace planning—for example, productivity or employer of choice; innovation—for example, product development; packaging and other market positioning considerations; and selling knowledge and expertise internationally.

A number of well-known Queensland companies are featured in the kits, including the Granite Belt winemaker Ballandean Estate Winery, Michael's Oriental Restaurant, travel call centre network operator Mindpearl, and Suncorp.