



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard 30 October 2003

RACISM

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (6.49 p.m.): Recently a number of members of this House went back to school, and might I say they were outstanding students. They went back to take the cane to racism. They went to learn about the importance of combating racism and why it is important to have an understanding of the issues facing migrants and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. The positive seminar reinforced the state government's commitment to multiculturalism and the fostering of an inclusive, cohesive and open society. It also provided real examples of how racism can hurt individuals and be a burden to society. The session was important to help those members understand the issues people from non-English speaking backgrounds face and to demonstrate how committed the Queensland government is to the concept of diversity.

For MPs to promote acceptance of ethnic and religious diversity in their own electorates they need to know the issues facing all members of Queensland society. It does not make sense for the government's representatives to be espousing acceptance if they have not yet been exposed to the real issues facing people in their communities.

The two-hour presentation provided members with information about the cross-cultural training that is delivered within the government's multicultural Queensland policy framework. Members had the opportunity to clarify issues relating to culture and gain further knowledge of the challenges of cross-cultural interaction by exploring areas such as the benefit and challenges of communicating through an interpreter, the dimensions of human diversity that influence behaviour, culture shock, accents and language influences on information processing, information categorisation and its influence on decision making, and interpretation and application of different rules of politeness and courtesy. The activities promoted an interesting, non-threatening and in-depth understanding of the real cross-cultural challenges.

The session was completely hands-on to help members fully understand the issues. For example, we experienced how difficult it is to adopt new values and behaviours when moving from one cultural place to another. We were also shown how we tend to respond to people who are similar or different to us and how challenging it is to ascribe correct characteristics when we listen to people who speak with a different accent. It was a great experience and I feel that I and many of my colleagues now have a far broader and more balanced understanding of why multiculturalism is great for Queensland and also how difficult life can be for people from non-English-speaking backgrounds coming to live in Australia. I am pleased the training session is available to the wider community and helps us to better understand why embracing diversity is so good for our communities and for all Queenslanders.