



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Greek Orthodox Church, 75th Anniversary

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.40 a.m.): On Friday night I had the pleasure of attending the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Greek Orthodox Church of St George, Brisbane. This was at the Greek Club. Among those attending were Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Governor of Queensland, and Mr Bryce; Anna Bligh, Minister for Education and the Arts; Karen Struthers, my parliamentary secretary for multicultural affairs; Jim Fouras, the member for Ashgrove, who has a bit of interest in what happens in the Greek community; and Darryl Briskey, the member for Cleveland.

The night was again another multicultural success in this state. The 75th anniversary of the consecration of Queensland's first Greek Orthodox Church provided the opportunity to reflect on the great contribution the people of Greece have made to our multicultural society.

Records of Greek settlers in Queensland before the colony separated from New South Wales in 1859 are scant. But what we do know for certain is that the wife of Queensland's first governor, Sir George Bowen, was a noblewoman from Greece, Countess Diamantina Roma. Sites named after her include both Roma and Countess Streets in Brisbane, the suburb of Ithaca, the Diamantina River and the town of Roma, not to mention the Roma Street Parklands.

In the years before federation, the number of Greek immigrants to Queensland was relatively small. They worked in, or owned, cafes. They were fishermen, farmers, railway workers and included a sprinkling of professionals. Migration gathered some momentum between 1901 and 1914. Indeed, it was in this period that some of the best known Queensland families of Greek origin reached our shores. But it was in the years immediately after the First World War that substantial migration from Greece to Queensland first took place. As people who know anything about history would understand, there was conflict between Turkey and Greece at the time and many Greeks who were living in what is now Turkey—in fact, about a million—were forced to flee following that conflict.

In the 75 years that have elapsed since the consecration of St George's, we have experienced another wave of immigration from Greece which in part stemmed from the troubles that followed the end of the Second World War.

Our Greek Queenslanders today are to be found throughout professions like law and accounting, and in industry, politics and education. Friday night's audience bore witness to that.

I am pleased to say that members of the Queensland Greek community have done well here, but they also have given much back to the Queensland community. We are a far richer society as a result of the influences from the ancient home of western democracy and culture.

I congratulate the Greek community of St George on 75 years of service to all the people of Queensland.

Also on Sunday, Education Minister Anna Bligh was on hand for the official opening of the Bundall Greek School opening at the Gold Coast. His Grace Bishop Seraphim, representing His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia, was also present on both occasions.