



Speech by

Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Wednesday, 24 March 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Multiculturalism

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.09 am): In recent times Queensland's demographics have undergone significant change. In 2008, approximately 100,000 people moved here, with 50,000 of these coming from overseas. This is in stark contrast to 14,000 just 10 years ago. According to a report by the Office of Economic and Statistical Research tabled by the Treasurer in October last year, Queensland takes in roughly one-fifth of Australia's immigration. New Zealand accounts for 40 per cent, the UK 18 per cent, South Africa five per cent and India four per cent. One-fifth, or 1,800, of these newly arrived immigrants were sponsored by the health care and social assistance area and approximately 2,300 by construction and manufacturing industries to assist our record building program.

There are opportunities and challenges associated with this evolving multicultural landscape and the Bligh government understands that we need to listen to Queenslanders to make our state a great place today and into the future. The Bligh government already invests more than \$20 million across government to assist people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Queensland Health has a five-year strategy to improve health in our migrant communities, including an interpreter service which has increased in demand by over 40 per cent within its first six months of introduction.

In relation to our newly arrived refugees, the Bligh government's Skilling Queenslanders for Work Initiative placed nearly 1,000 people and job seekers from diverse backgrounds into employment opportunities last financial year. We also recognise that interpreter services are fundamental to making our services accessible. That is why in 2008 the Premier directed all departments to provide access to interpreter services for clients. The success of this directive is illustrated by the program's expenditure of around \$6 million in 2008-09.

The Bligh government is not going to sit back and say that is good enough. That is why we are currently reviewing our multicultural policy. We want to ensure that our policy is relevant to our culturally diverse state. To date, nearly 500 people have attended seven of the 25 planned public forums and I look forward to speaking with even more people over the coming months in developing a multicultural policy for all Queenslanders.