



Speech by

**Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

Hansard Tuesday, 11 October 2011

---

## MULTICULTURAL RECOGNITION BILL

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs) (12.45 pm): I present a bill for an act to provide for a Multicultural Queensland Charter, a Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council and a multicultural action plan and for related purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Community Affairs Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Multicultural Recognition Bill 2011 [[5588](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Multicultural Recognition Bill 2011, explanatory notes [[5589](#)].

I am pleased to introduce a bill for an act that strengthens and supports the implementation of Queensland's multicultural policy—'A multicultural future for all of us'. The Multicultural Recognition Bill 2011 is a further demonstration of this government's commitment to, and support for, a multicultural Queensland.

Queensland is a multicultural success story—home to more than 200 cultures, 220 languages and 100 religious beliefs. People from all walks of life and all parts of the globe have all contributed towards our great state. Queensland migrants enrich our cultural life and help to power our economy. Approximately 18 per cent of Queenslanders are born overseas and 7.8 per cent of us speak a language other than English at home. The bill cements Queensland's position as a welcoming and inclusive place for people of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds and religious beliefs. Legislation will strengthen and support the implementation of the policy—'A multicultural future for all of us'. Legislation will encourage improved service delivery from government agencies to Queenslanders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

On 19 July this year, the Premier and I launched the new Queensland multicultural policy. This policy builds on our past achievements to improve access to services and achieve more positive outcomes across employment, education and health for people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and to support positive community relations and promote our multicultural heritage. Further, a key initiative of the policy is the introduction of multicultural recognition legislation in 2011. The tabling of this bill today marks the achievement of this important milestone.

The consultation for the review of the previous multicultural policy indicated significant community support for legislation to demonstrate Queensland's commitment to multiculturalism. Over 1,300 participants, from Cairns to the Gold Coast and from Mount Isa to Gladstone, attended 31 community forums held around the state about the multicultural policy. Specific representations in favour of multicultural legislation were made by key stakeholders such as the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, the Queensland Council of Social Service and the Multicultural Development Association—just to name a few. The multicultural sector also indicated their support for multicultural legislation following the launch of the policy, and the government has listened to their views.

There is current precedent for principles based legislation. For example, the Carers (Recognition) Act 2008 was introduced to recognise the importance of the contribution of carers and establish a Carers Advisory Council. The bill also has similar elements to the Carers (Recognition) Act 2008. The bill will

recognise the diversity of the people of Queensland and the valuable contribution of diverse groups to the Queensland community; promote Queensland as a united, harmonious and inclusive community by establishing the Multicultural Queensland Charter; and ensure government services are responsive to the diversity of the people of Queensland by providing for the multicultural action plan, establishing reporting arrangements for departments and establishing the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council.

It is important to note that governance and reporting arrangements are key features of the bill. Queensland has a proud record of welcoming people from diverse cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. Queensland and Australia's success as an increasingly culturally diverse society rests on our strong approach to multiculturalism—one that emphasises the value of citizenship, diversity, harmony and a 'fair go'.

Queensland continues to experience significant population growth, including through overseas migration. There are also evolving challenges amongst some Queenslanders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, especially from the more recent arrivals from areas such as Africa, Afghanistan, Burma and the Pacific Islands.

The bill also introduces a Multicultural Queensland Charter. This charter outlines principles enshrined in the Bligh government's multicultural policy and recognises the valuable contribution of diverse groups of people to the Queensland community. This charter provides a clear vision for a Queensland that respects and values all community members. The bill does not create rights or impose legally enforceable obligations; rather it is about recognising that diversity is an integral part of Queensland's identity and an invaluable asset for our future.


The bill also establishes the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council which will consist of 11 members. The council will replace the Multicultural Community Ministerial Advisory Committee in advising government on how to develop and deliver policy, services and programs that meet the needs of people from culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The bill provides for three-yearly multicultural action plans. The Premier and I launched the new Multicultural Queensland Policy with a three-year multicultural action plan in July this year. The first plan under the act will be required to be tabled by 2014.

To provide the level of accountability that the Bligh government demands, the bill requires reporting on the progress achieved in implementing the multicultural action plan. Under the bill, information regarding implementation must be included in departments' annual reports. The community will know exactly how the government is progressing on multicultural issues.

Potential impacts on other Queensland legislation, such as the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991, have been considered and the bill has been drafted to ensure that there is no conflict with any other acts. The introduction of this bill is the government's firm commitment to multiculturalism. I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs) (12.51 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms van Litsenburg): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Community Affairs Committee.