




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2015

MULTICULTURAL RECOGNITION BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (2.53 pm): I present a bill for an act to provide for a Multicultural Queensland Charter, a Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council, a multicultural policy and a multicultural action plan and for other particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Multicultural Recognition Bill 2015 [[1493](#)].

Tabled paper: Multicultural Recognition Bill 2015, explanatory notes [[1494](#)].

The Multicultural Recognition Bill 2015 will deliver on the Palaszczuk government's election commitment to promote Queensland as a united, harmonious and inclusive community and foster an environment of opportunity for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The Palaszczuk government recognises that a diverse, dynamic and cohesive society provides profound benefits for all of our community. Our prosperity and productivity can only benefit from diversified workforce and business ventures and improved tourism and export markets. Despite these benefits and opportunities, evidence shows newly arrived migrants are often disadvantaged in participating in our economy.

This bill will bring Queensland into line with New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia by creating legislation that recognises our diverse cultural heritage and commits support for our multicultural and multifaith communities. This bill demonstrates parliament's commitment to multiculturalism by introducing a Multicultural Queensland Charter that outlines multicultural principles promoting harmony, inclusion and fairness. It is a statement of our values and aspirations. It is about who we are and what we hope to become.

The bill also establishes a Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council to provide advice on the issues facing Queenslanders from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds—and how these can be addressed. Importantly, the advisory council's terms of reference will focus on the economic participation of migrants and refugees.

The bill imposes no compulsory requirements on business and community service providers. However, the Multicultural Queensland Charter is for anyone and everyone to adopt. Its inclusive principles can be incorporated and championed by any socially responsible business or community service provider, from how they manage workforce diversity to, if relevant, developing tailored responses to particularly vulnerable culturally and linguistically diverse customer groups.

Under this bill, the Queensland government entities, including departments and other statutory bodies will lead the way. For example, the bill requires the Queensland government to prepare a

multicultural policy and action plan that will translate the principles of the charter into actions and outcomes for Queenslanders of all backgrounds.

The bill also provides strong accountabilities, including a requirement for the responsible minister to report to parliament on the outcomes of the multicultural policy at least every three years. Those government departments that are responsible for implementing the multicultural action plan will be required to report publicly on their progress every year.

The bill also requires the chief executives of Queensland government agencies to inform their staff about the charter and the multicultural policy and action plan in order to build the capacity and translate the charter into practice. In addition, the bill enables the advisory council to undertake consultations with multicultural and multifaith communities and requires the publication of a communique after each meeting so that advisory council processes are transparent and accountable.

Furthermore, the bill requires that statistical data regarding people from culturally and linguistically diverse customers is collected in a consistent and sensitive fashion. This will strengthen data collection across relevant government agencies and, in doing so, improve the evidence on which targeted programs and services are based.

In all, the bill will ensure that the Queensland government's policies, programs and services recognise and respond to Queensland's growing multicultural population and address wideranging issues including economic participation, domestic and family violence and mental health. It will provide real outcomes for Queensland, positioning the state to take advantage of overseas investment, trade and tourism, and solidifying our reputation as a safe, welcoming and cohesive community.

The bill complements existing anti-discrimination legislation, such as the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 and the federal Racial Discrimination Act 1975. In August this year, my department consulted with key stakeholders through seven targeted forums to ensure that provisions in the bill reflect contemporary community views on promoting community harmony and inclusiveness.

Forums were held in Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, the Logan and Gold Coast region, Mount Isa, Toowoomba and Brisbane. These forums attracted a range of people which has been a great reflection of the diversity of our great state. I would like to thank all the community stakeholders who participated in the forums as well as the members of the interim Multicultural Community Reference Group, who provided invaluable advice during the development of the bill. Feedback from all stakeholders was incredibly positive, reinforcing the need for the legislation.

I am confident that this bill is a robust and durable instrument that will strengthen multicultural policy, program development and implementation across government and help fulfil this government's commitment to give Queenslanders of all backgrounds the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the economic, social and cultural fabric of our state. The bill also demonstrates the Palaszczuk government's continued commitment to a multicultural society, which is an invaluable asset for our future.

I am proud to be introducing this legislation into the House today and to recognise the ongoing contribution that multiculturalism makes to building a prosperous and diverse Queensland. It will help ensure that Queensland continues to be a united, harmonious and inclusive society that provides economic opportunities for everyone. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. SM FENTIMAN (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (2.59 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.

Referral to the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee.