




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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MULTICULTURAL RECOGNITION BILL

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (3.26 pm): Queensland is a truly multicultural success story. People from all walks of life and from countries all over the world have settled here, each one contributing toward their local communities and our great state. We are home to people from more than 220 different countries and geographical locations who speak over 220 languages and embrace more than 100 different religions or belief systems. Our state is richer for its multiculturalism. It is at the heart of who we are. Our multicultural communities have strengthened our community harmony and cohesion, created jobs, wealth, brought new ideas and enriched our way of life. Today is a great day to celebrate our multicultural society. We celebrate our inclusiveness of different cultures, religions and traditions and we celebrate our respect towards one another. Today we celebrate a harmonious Queensland with the Multicultural Recognition Bill.

The Palaszczuk government has always been committed to delivering a Multicultural Recognition Bill which will provide for a multicultural Queensland charter which aims to recognise the contribution of Queenslanders from diverse backgrounds and promote Queensland as a united, harmonious and inclusive community. The bill also creates a multicultural Queensland advisory council to advise the minister on multicultural issues and consult with culturally and linguistically diverse communities and other interest groups and a multicultural policy and multicultural action plan with associated implementation and reporting requirements for government entities.

I congratulate Minister Grace on her recent appointment as Minister for Multicultural Affairs and congratulate Minister Fentiman, the former minister for multicultural affairs, on engaging with the community about the Multicultural Recognition Bill. A forum was held in Rockhampton last year, which was well attended. A number of these forums were held across Queensland. The learnings from the government's broad consultation has underpinned our efforts to make Queensland an even more united, harmonious and inclusive community.

This new bill brings Queensland into line with New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia which all have similar legislation. The Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council will advise and make recommendations about government policies on multiculturalism and the economic participation of migrants and refugees. The council will also consult with multicultural communities across the state, including in regional, rural and remote Queensland. This bill is great for Queensland and it is great news for our local Keppel multicultural community.

This bill will enshrine in legislation our government's commitment to multiculturalism and symbolically recognise the contribution of Queensland's multicultural and multifaith groups to our public life. I am sure the flow-on effects will encourage people to participate in our community, to respect and celebrate different cultures and religions, and to foster a sense of belonging for everyone. The bill 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 all people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Multiculturalism benefits our economy, productivity, workforce and regional development. Cultural and linguistic diversity in the workplace also has many benefits, including increased creativity, increased productivity, new attitudes, new language skills, global understanding, new processes and new solutions to difficult problems. People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can help businesses to understand Australia's multicultural consumers, provide better customer service by using their language and cultural skills, provide access to new market segments and networks, and expand internationally to overseas markets. Businesses can also be enhanced with the different perspectives, experience and knowledge of Indigenous employees. They can contribute to the development of cross-cultural awareness in the workplace, which is vital in communicating with suppliers and customers from diverse backgrounds. I am also pleased to hear that the advisory council's terms of reference will focus on the economic participation of migrants and refugees, given the Premier's recent announcement that Queensland stands ready and able to resettle 3,500 refugees fleeing conflict in Syria.

Statistical data regarding culturally and linguistically diverse people will be collected across relevant government agencies as part of the bill, to improve the evidence on which targeted programs and services are based. Chief executives of Queensland government agencies will also be required to inform their staff about the charter and the bill's multicultural policy and action plan in order to translate the charter into practice. An interim multicultural reference group has had input into the development of the bill and charter, and nominations will be called for a permanent advisory council.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions that our multicultural and multifaith communities make to my electorate of Keppel. Keppel has become increasingly multicultural and it has been a delight to celebrate our diverse cultures through celebrations, festivals and other events, such as Harmony Day. Harmony Day is a day of cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home, from the traditional owners of this land to those who have come from many countries across the world. I would like to acknowledge the work of Joy Davison-Lee and her Harmony Day organising committee. I am proud to have sponsored the Harmony Day celebrations in 2015 and 2016. It is a wonderful opportunity to showcase and celebrate Queensland's diversity. We love celebrating Harmony Day in Keppel. Since I was elected I have attended many other multicultural events, including the Multicultural Week breakfast in Rockhampton, the Rockhampton Cultural Festival, the Taste of the World Festival, Africa Day, the Peace & Dialogue Iftar Dinner in Brisbane, Fiji Day celebrations, the Islamic Society of Central Queensland's mosque open day and NAIDOC Week. At all of those events, constituents have told me how much they support the introduction of this Multicultural Recognition Bill.

I thank groups and organisations in Central Queensland such as Jane Chapman and the team at the Multicultural Development Association, Ataus Samad from Access Community Services, Filimone Levici and the Capricornia Fiji Association, Lawrence Chitura and the Central Queensland African Association, Binil Kattiparambil and all of the members of the Islamic Society of Central Queensland, Joy Davison-Lee and her team at the Central Queensland Multicultural Association, Ben Cooke and the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland, both Rockhampton and Livingstone councils and all of the groups and organisations in Central Queensland that contribute to celebrating our community's diversity.

Congratulations also to all of the members of the Rockhampton Region Cultural Diversity Reference Group, including Ashley Hull and the Queensland Police Service, the Multicultural Development Association, Kim Harrington and everyone at CQ University, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the Rockhampton Regional Council, the Department of Education and Training, the Lutheran Church, the Catholic Diocese and the Central Queensland Community Legal Centre. The group was first established to connect services, community groups and volunteers who work with our culturally and linguistically diverse community, particularly migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Their passion and dedication to celebrating diversity in our community makes Rocky and the coast such a great place to live.

I am also pleased that three community organisations in Keppel have shared in \$12,500 to host diverse cultural celebrations, events and multicultural projects this year. I love to celebrate with our local organisations and in 2015 there were plenty of reasons to celebrate. Through the Celebrating Multicultural Queensland grants program, we can celebrate a range of cultures and traditions through festivals and cultural days, and promote our area as a welcoming place to live. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the development of this bill and who has come together to celebrate community participation, inclusiveness and our vibrant cultural life here in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.