




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Record of Proceedings, 16 February 2016

MULTICULTURAL RECOGNITION BILL

Second Reading

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12.53 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I would like to thank the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee for its examination of the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2015 which recommended that the bill be passed. I would also like to thank all of the organisations and individuals who provided a submission to the committee in relation to the bill. Many of the submissions included suggestions for ways that the bill can be implemented in practice, and all these will be carefully considered during the implementation phase.

The committee also recommended that the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services work with the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council to put in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the views of Queensland's diverse communities, in particular those in regional and rural locations, are sought and considered by the council. The Queensland government accepts this recommendation. I now table the government response to report No. 11 of the relevant committee.

Tabled paper: Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Report No. 11, 55th Parliament—Multicultural Recognition Bill 2015, government response [\[154\]](#).

The bill under clause 10 already sets out that the minister must have regard to the need for the membership of the advisory council to be representative of diverse groups of people in the Queensland community including people from regional locations. The functions of the advisory council as set out in clause 9 include consulting with groups or entities as directed by the minister. This could include consultation in particular locations or with particular groups to ensure a wide variety of views and perspectives are sought. In addition, to ensure this recommendation is met, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services will work with the advisory council once it is established to develop appropriate mechanisms to engage with a range of diverse communities and groups including in regional and rural locations and other potential stakeholders such as the business sector. We will make it as broad as we can.

The bill is an important step for the Palaszczuk government and this parliament to recognise that a cohesive multicultural society like ours with all of its diversity brings with it significant benefits to our state that we should be proud of and celebrate. This bill is a key mechanism for this government to ensure that those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are given opportunities to participate in the economy and community.

As the daughter of Italian-Sicilian born parents, I am very passionate about Queensland multiculturalism. My parents came to Australia from Sicily in the early 1950s—and I see one member who I know has an affinity with some of the Italian community in his electorate—

Mr Costigan: And Maltese.


Ms GRACE:—and Maltese—and worked tirelessly to raise six daughters, making no secret of the fact that they tried six times for a boy. They raised us in Spring Hill and later in New Farm. I have lived in my electorate all my life, and I think my electorate is a shining success story for Queensland multiculturalism. They could not have raised six daughters without the support of family, especially my nonna Grazia, who played such an important role in helping them build a better life in Queensland.

Government also has a role to play in supporting migrants who want to call Queensland home. We want to help Queenslanders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to take advantage of the tremendous opportunity our state offers, no matter where they come from. Our multicultural community does and can continue to provide us with opportunities to develop a diversified workforce as well as business opportunities in tourism and unique access to export markets. This can only improve our competitiveness and our prosperity in a global economy.

Evidence shows newly arrived migrants are often disadvantaged in participating in our economy. The Palaszczuk government is already working towards practical steps to improve economic participation for migrants and refugees. I am very pleased that this government is a proud champion and supporter of MDA's Work and Welcome 500 initiative which involves individuals and businesses supporting refugees into work placements. The aim is to find 500 work placements for 500 refugees. The work placements are for 12 weeks and give refugees their first experience in an Australian workplace. This is a huge help to successful settlement for the individuals and their families.

My department, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, has agreed to take two placements and to promote the program across government. The Multicultural Queensland Charter, which forms an integral part of this bill, will promote principles such as fairness, inclusion and harmony. The Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council, another component of the bill, will ensure that the voices of our multicultural and multifaith communities from across the state are heard. Under this bill, government departments will provide leadership in translating the charter principles into practice through a multicultural policy and action plan.

In the relatively short time since becoming Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I have had the privilege of attending a number of significant cultural events and celebrations, including this week's Chinese New Year celebrations which will be held here in Parliament House. I look forward to attending that. I was also very pleased to attend the official opening of the Punjabi Welfare Association of Australia in Mount Gravatt in January. I look forward to engaging with Queensland's multicultural community in the coming months. The first event I attended after being elected as the member for Brisbane Central in 2007—and I remember it fondly—was the multicultural festival in Roma Street. We were exhausted after a long campaign, and I attended that with the current Premier and then minister for multicultural affairs, Annastacia Palaszczuk.

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (2.54 pm), continuing: Those who know me will know that over my lifetime I have been passionate about and involved in multicultural affairs and have long supported the role of various ethnic chambers such as the Queensland Italian Chamber of Commerce & Industry and have been very supportive of the Consulate of Italy in Brisbane, successfully campaigning to stop the closure of this important service for Italians who live in Queensland. I welcome now the full-time Italian Consul Ludovico Camussi, who is doing an excellent job working in the community.

I am also involved with other multicultural groups including the Multicultural Community Centre, led by the ever vivacious Jeannie Mok and her husband, David. They have a fantastic festival—the Technicolour Multicultural Festival—held in Newmarket which I attended last year. Obviously there are many other multicultural celebrations that I know all of us, on both sides of the House, enjoy attending. We love participating in their culture, their food, their music and everything on offer at those festivals. I see a lot of members in the House nodding to indicate their involvement in the various events that are held in their electorates.

I know that while our journeys to make Queensland our home may have varied—we may have arrived originally in different ships but we are all in the same boat—we share a common desire to contribute to our communities and our wonderful state and to have a sense of belonging. I know that a sense of belonging is very important to a lot of people from multicultural backgrounds—belonging to not only the state of Queensland but also Australia.

The government will lead the way in embedding the principles of the charter in government entities, and the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services will commence activities to promote the charter as widely as possible to encourage community organisations and businesses to also adopt the charter. I think the charter has some fantastic elements. If members from both sides of the House promote it in our communities, I think it will go a long way to establishing Queensland as the premier state for tolerance and social cohesion.

If the bill is passed, I will also open the nomination process for the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council. The nomination process will include clear selection criteria to ensure members have the skills and experience to undertake their role on the council, acknowledging of course the representation from regional and rural Queensland.

We will also engage with the community to seek their views on a new multicultural policy and action plan. I know that many members in this House will work together with their communities to seek their views so that we can develop a multicultural policy and action plan that is second to none, not only in Queensland but also in Australia. The policy will set desired outcomes to be achieved, and the action plan will set out key actions to be taken by government entities. I think that is very important so that we ensure the charter principles of equal access and a fair go for the multicultural community so that they have equal opportunities to jobs and all the other services that governments in this state and in Australia have to offer.

I am confident that this legislation will make a difference to the lives of Queenslanders from many different backgrounds and will help unite us, enhance cohesiveness in our communities and give us a chance to celebrate and cherish our diversity. I am a very proud Australian Italian, and I am very proud to work with the multicultural community. I look forward to ensuring that the provisions of this bill, once enacted, are put in place as soon as possible. I look forward to working with all members, from both sides of the House, on these issues of multiculturalism. I commend the bill to the House.