



Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Record of Proceedings, 16 February 2016

MULTICULTURAL RECOGNITION BILL

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games) (5.25 pm): I rise to speak in support of the bill. I congratulate the Minister for Multicultural Affairs on the work that she has done since being made the minister and the work that she has done to specifically steward this bill into the House for the second reading debate. I also congratulate the former minister for her work around the introduction of the bill and the consultation leading up to the preparation of the bill. It is great to see both of those ministers in the House as I have the chance to speak to the Multicultural Recognition Bill.

I know that the Premier has had a firm commitment to the bill as well. When the Premier was the minister for multicultural affairs she championed very similar legislation, as she did further as opposition leader. I know that a number of members have made reference to that in the debate today.

I appreciate and agree with the stated aim of the bill which is to recognise the valuable contribution of diverse groups of people to the Queensland community, promote Queensland as a united, harmonious and inclusive community and ensure that government services are responsive to the diversity of the Queensland population. This bill delivers on an election commitment of the Palaszczuk government to implement legislation to ensure that the Queensland government's policies, programs and services recognise and respond to the culturally and linguistically diverse population of Queensland.

I am committed to us doing that because it is very much a part of modernising the state—that is, making sure that our institutions and our policies respond to what a modern Queensland is all about. That is the strength of its diversity and the outward-looking nature of our state. This is yet another acknowledgement and recognition of that. We are institutionalising the opportunities to engage and be thoughtful of the sorts of policies, activities, programs and services that will support a diverse, multicultural and modern Queensland.

I know that these aims are recognised in my electorate of Sandgate. I am very proud to represent a culturally diverse electorate. In the Sandgate community we have a very strong Greek community, Chinese community, Indian and other subcontinent communities—particularly the Punjabi community—and Filipino migrant community. It is very much an honour to represent an electorate with this level of diversity and also have an electorate that shares my views about a united, harmonious, inclusive and modern community.

Indeed, my electorate is also home to a Sikh temple and the St Paraskevi Greek Orthodox Church, both at Taigum, and also a Daoist temple at Deagon. Just outside of my electorate at Bald Hills—literally just on the other side of the railway line—in the electorate of Aspley is a mosque. We also have very nearby a Hindu temple at Boondall in the electorate of Nudgee. This extraordinarily diverse set of faith communities who have come to and settled in our local community have brought a

great deal of richness to our part of the north side. I have been delighted to engage with the local Punjabi Sikh community to assist with the works on the Gurdwara, the Sikh temple that I mentioned.

In Fitzgibbon, a suburb in my electorate, there is a significant population of Nepalese born residents. Last year I proudly joined them and the local community organisation Sandbag in organising a fundraising event for the victims of the awful earthquake that devastated Nepal in April. People from all corners of the Fitzgibbon, Taigum and Bracken Ridge communities came together for that event, where the best of Nepalese dance, music and food was on show. As we all know—and we have heard it from a number of contributors this afternoon—those opportunities to celebrate diversity, to celebrate the tastes of culture from across our world that make up the community that we now enjoy, are very valuable, and it was valuable on that occasion because it was for a good cause. Very often the good cause is just good community. That is when people come together to enjoy music, dance and food. It all comes together with good community.

I also reflect that at around that same time, in April last year, I attended and supported the Niuean community, a very small community from the Pacific islands. The Niuean community had a very small yet very active group in my local community. Last Anzac Day the Niuean community held a service and dedicated a monument in the memorial park in Sandgate to remember the massive sacrifice that small nation made during the First World War. When the King of Niue in 1914 heard the message from the King of England that they needed warriors, he sent hundreds—and they never came back. That is something that the local community want to appreciate, celebrate and understand. That is something that, as a broader community, the Sandgate community have joined with them in doing.

Similarly, on an occasion to acknowledge the eighth anniversary of the apology to Indigenous communities across Australia, the Koobara kindergarten in my electorate at Taigum held an event. It was great to see the way the whole community came together to be a part of that and to understand that we could bring our cultures together, whilst celebrating our differences and celebrating our traditions, and share them.

Since being returned to this place I have had the opportunity to represent the former minister for multicultural affairs at the Philippine Independence Day reception, where I joined with that community in celebrating 117 years of Philippine independence from Spain. You do not need to look too far to see the contributions made by Queenslanders of Filipino ancestry. Just last year we all celebrated and enjoyed the successes of champion golfer Jason Day. I note that in the last census there were many hundreds of people in the Sandgate electorate who indicated that they were born in the Philippines. I get to meet plenty of Filipino families each and every weekend from right across the north side when I am at local junior basketball fixtures. You cannot get a better opportunity to meet Filipino families than at something to do with basketball. They all love the sport very much and it is part of the celebration of their culture.

The bill introduces the Multicultural Queensland Charter, which upholds the principles of promoting harmony and inclusion. Furthermore, the legislation creates the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council, which will provide advice on the issues and barriers facing Queenslanders. The advisory council will also look at how we can address the economic participation of migrants and refugees. There is evidence that suggests that newly arrived migrants are disadvantaged in participating in the economy and also have some of the highest rates of unemployment. We can all see that and know that firsthand from our own experiences.

I congratulate the former minister on the consultation work that occurred in bringing this legislation forward. I also acknowledge the work that the committee did in reviewing that piece of work and coming together on delivering a great opportunity to enhance, celebrate and, as I say, institutionally enshrine multiculturalism in our state.

The range of advice that the council will be able to provide to culturally and linguistically diverse communities is very important and will be very valuable. I thank the minister for bringing this legislation forward. I am very proud to be a member of the Palaszczuk Labor government when it brings matters like this forward to parliament. I am very proud to be a member of the government that promotes Queensland as a united, harmonious and inclusive community. This sort of legislation is a genuine taste of what a modern Queensland is all about—bringing Queensland not only out of the dark days but also very firmly into the 21st century as an outward-looking state, embracing change and embracing opportunities. I commend the bill to the House.