




Speech By
Tarnya Smith

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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MULTICULTURAL RECOGNITION BILL

 **Mrs SMITH** (Mount Ommaney—LNP) (2.58 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2015. I start by saying that the LNP is committed to a fair and culturally diverse Queensland. The LNP believes that all Queenslanders have the right to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including language and religion, and we support the removal of barriers of race, culture, religion and language while encouraging and promoting full economic participation. I take this opportunity to acknowledge that this is the minister's first bill before the parliament and to congratulate her on her appointment in her new role as Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. After a couple of false starts within her own portfolio areas like the racing fiasco and that youth unemployment is outside her control—yikes!—I am happy to help the minister out here with this portfolio by supporting the bill.

This bill consists of three main elements: firstly, to establish the Multicultural Queensland Charter, which aims to recognise the contribution of Queenslanders from diverse backgrounds and promote Queensland as a united, harmonious and inclusive community; secondly, to establish the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council to advise the minister on multicultural issues and consult with culturally and linguistically diverse communities and other interest groups; and, thirdly, to implement the multicultural policy and multicultural action plan. I want to acknowledge the good work undertaken by the former minister, Glen Elmes, which now forms the basis of the government charter.

While I rise in support of this bill, I want to take this opportunity to raise the following questions, concerns and issues I have with this piece of legislation: firstly, the selection process for the advisory council; secondly, how will this bill achieve jobs for migrants and assist in improved economic participation; and, thirdly, what performance measures will be put in place to measure the success of this bill and track the number of jobs being created? I note in the previous minister's introductory speech that the bill also provided 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. The accountabilities should extend to an open, transparent and fair selection process for members of the advisory committee—not like the closed-door, union-led selection of members of the Stolen Wages Taskforce. Ema Vueti and Salome Swan in their submissions highlighted that the minister has great powers in this bill. The bill assumes that the final decisions are the responsibility of the minister and, by doing this, the bill restricts itself. This echoes my concerns in the transparency of that selection process.

ECCQ is the peak body and has played a vital role in the success of Queensland multicultural expansion over many years. At nearly every event I have attended over the past 12 months Serge and Anna Voloshenko and other members have been there in full support, and that dedication is one of the reasons our multicultural landscape here in Queensland has been so successful. While I support this bill, I am concerned that the positive theme of this bill will not translate into achieving meaningful

employment and long-term prosperity for migrants. The committee report contains sections of the department's submission that said—

However, despite the benefits that migrants bring to Queensland, it is also recognised that newly arrived migrants are 'often disadvantaged in participating in the economy', facing a range of significant barriers to finding employment.

We on this side of the House are fully supportive of good legislation that enhances ongoing strong bonds between Queenslanders of different backgrounds and building a prosperous Queensland. I further note that in her introductory speech Minister Fentiman outlined that this legislation recognises the ongoing contribution that multiculturalism makes to build a prosperous and diverse Queensland, and that is why I question how it will benefit and how we will measure how effective it will be for CALD people in actually contributing to the economy. How will the minister measure the success if the requirement of the minister is to only update the House every three years on the outcome of this bill, and I think that that is something that needs to be explored further?

The opposition embraces practical solutions to improving access to meaningful employment. Only last week—and the minister mentioned this organisation—the Leader of the Opposition and I visited the Multicultural Community Centre at Newmarket and witnessed firsthand a highly successful multicultural community group. Our visit saw how the great work of Jeannie Mok, as mentioned by the minister, leads to truly positive outcomes for some of the most disadvantaged people in our community. What was so impressive about that community centre was that it is running programs which boast a 98 per cent completion rate and an 87 per cent success rate of gaining employment after graduation—an 87 per cent success rate of employment after graduation—with a keen focus on the childcare and aged-care industries. On the day that Lawrence and I visited, over 22 nations were participating, and this is true diversity coming together through Jeannie's passion. She and her committed team provide the ingredients of having a belief in an individual, providing them with an opportunity and giving them hope.

Multiculturalism serves as a positive instrument aimed at the removal of barriers and promoting economic involvement, equity and access for all Queenslanders. The bill recognises the need to increase participation but is silent on how this will be achieved. All government departments—not just the ministry responsible for multiculturalism—are currently expected to provide leadership in the aims of the multicultural bill. I would also like to see plans, programs and strategies that enhance the full participation of culturally diverse people within Queensland.