

**Question on Notice
No. 217
Asked on 22 February 2007**

QUESTION:

MR HAYWARD asked the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism (Ms Nelson-Carr)—

What funding does the Queensland Government provide to encourage communities to embrace multiculturalism and are any of these funds provided to assist emerging communities in Queensland?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring that government services are responsive to cultural diversity, with all Queensland Government departments having a part to play.

To promote this commitment, the Government uses multi-dimensional strategies including cultural celebrations, inter-governmental partnerships, community engagement and community development.

The Queensland Government Multicultural Policy – *making a world of difference*, commits to building a cohesive, united and harmonious society that accepts and respects cultural diversity and has successfully encouraged interaction between communities with initiatives such as interfaith dialogue, projects that bring people together, and celebrations of our diversity through festivals and other events and activities.

Departmental specific Multicultural Action Plans reinforce the Government's commitment to providing culturally sensitive and inclusive services to a culturally-diverse community and address issues of marginalisation, disadvantage and discrimination. Action Plans also outline funding on initiatives of Government to assist emerging communities in Queensland. In December 2006, the Queensland Government reported back to the community through *Multicultural Highlights 2005-06*, outlining their progress towards more responsive and accessible government services, policies and programs to Queensland's diverse population.

In my own portfolio, \$3.4 million is allocated annually to a range of strategies that support multiculturalism across the State, including community development and community relations projects, activities and events and programs such as the Local Area Multicultural Partnerships Program (LAMP) and Multicultural Community Worker Program also known as CAMS, which provide sustainable approaches to assist Councils and not-for-profit organisations in providing advice and support to emerging communities' integration in Queensland. Two positions under the Multicultural Community Worker program have been assigned to work exclusively with the African and Pacific Islander communities to enable organisations to engage these communities.

In addition to this \$3.4 million, the Queensland Government committed \$700,000 towards the Muslim Community Engagement Strategy. The Strategy includes funding for two youth workers; celebrations for Islam Awareness Week; research projects and two rounds of small grants to support understanding and interaction across different faith and cultural groups.

On 7 February 2007, the Abrahamic Faiths Forum was held at Parliament House. This forum was attended by almost 200 people, including leaders from each of the 3 Abrahamic faiths, community leaders, government representatives and Members of Parliament. The event was marked by a wonderful sense of sharing and mutual respect amongst members of the faith groups and will serve as a strong foundation for ongoing dialogue and interaction.

Project and event funding totalling \$125,305 was specifically provided from the Multicultural Assistance Program in the 2006-07 financial year to assist new and emerging communities. Projects funded this year include Impact on Skilled Migration in Rural and Regional Qld Research Project, Connected Communities - Strengthening Connections with Refugee Communities from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, and Journey of Understanding - Refugee Education Program.

My Agency is also responsible for an inclusive annual celebratory event in Brisbane that is focused on multiculturalism. The Queensland Multicultural Festival will be held on 14 October this year. In addition, the annual multicultural Photographic Awards offers more prize money than any other photographic award competition in the country.

New initiatives, such as whole-of-government strategies to address and respond to the specific needs of our African and Pacific Islander communities and a partnership between Multicultural Affairs Queensland and the Queensland Roar Football Club, aimed at fostering community harmony and addressing racism and discrimination, are being progressed.

The Government is pleased to support Queenslanders to embrace our shared responsibility to work together for harmony, and oppose intolerance and I would like to emphasise the fact that the Queensland Government continues to promote positive, healthy and culturally sensitive community relations.