

Settlement Council of Australia

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4th October 2012

Peter Dowling, MP
Chair
Health and Community Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Mr Dowling,

SCOA submission on the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012

Thank you for inviting the Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) to submit comments on the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012. SCOA represents a broad network of nearly 80 settlement agencies around Australia. As advocates and service providers, the sector has a unique knowledge of the realities of the settlement experience, over time, across the country, and among hundreds of different ethno-cultural communities. Within this settlement work our member agencies are in a position to assist refugees and migrants who are living the reality of multicultural Australia today.

SCOA's consultation with members and our research into the area have informed the preparation of this submission. The submission does not go into legal specifics, as that is not our (or our members) area of expertise, but highlights important issues relevant to migrant and refugee communities and the settlement sector in Australia in relation to multiculturalism. I have also attached for your reference submissions SCOA made at the federal level to the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Multiculturalism and Migration last year.

SCOA endorses the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012 as an important step forward for Queensland in developing a legislative framework which will strengthen and support diversity and multiculturalism in Queensland. The legislative recognition of the importance of diversity, the strengthening of government responsiveness to diversity and the establishment of Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council will greatly strengthen community inclusiveness and harmony in Queensland.

SCOA has seen that access to government services in jurisdictions where multicultural plans are supported by a legislative framework is stronger. The benefits to the community through ensuring equitable access to services are widely acknowledged, strengthening community cohesion and providing resultant benefits to the community and the economy from cultural diversity. A public commitment to multiculturalism, such as proposed by the Multicultural Recognition Bill 2012,

provides a clear commitment to all members of the community that diversity and respect are a core component of community life.

SCOA welcomes the strengthening of multiculturalism in Queensland which the introduction of this bill will bring. SCOA has also prepared submissions on multiculturalism at the federal level, these are attached for your reference as they may provide relevant additional information to the committee.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any queries or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sky de Jersey', with a stylized, cursive style.

Sky de Jersey
Executive Officer

Attachments: SCOA Submission to the Multiculturalism Inquiry, April 11 and additional comments, July 11