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Response to: A Multicultural future for all of us.... Queensland Government Multicultural Policy Review

About Nambour Community Centre Inc.

Nambour Community Centre is a community organization inspired by the vision in which people experience healthy relationships and create sustainable communities that are safe and just.

The *Nambour Community Centre Inc.'s Cultural Connections* program, is a community development program that works with people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. The aim of the program is to build the capacity of individuals and groups from CALD backgrounds, build bridges within the wider community, foster social equity and celebrate the rich cultural heritage that exists on the Sunshine Coast. According to the 2006 ABS one in six people living on the Sunshine Coast, were born overseas and one in 17 people were born in a non-English speaking country (16,410 people).

Over the past five years the Cultural Connections Multicultural Community Development program and been an active member in the CAMS network, Queenslanders Accessing Interpreters group and advocacy strategies to improve Education Queensland ESL policy. The Nambour Community Centre has strong relationships with a diverse range of cultural groups and mainstream organizations across the Sunshine Coast region. It is from the experience of working closely with people and organizations to understand their issues and develop responses that we have drawn these following recommendations.

Employment and Business Initiatives

Question 1

a) How can we promote the benefits of a diverse workforce to community, industry and business stakeholders?

1. All government departments can set targets for having a diverse workforce, in proportion to diversity figures in the area.
2. Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation can provide employers that employ migrants a financial subsidy that they can spend on; on job training and support to overcome some of the barriers that migrants to face, such as transferring their skills to different workplace systems and a comprehensive orientation to assist adapting to the Australian workplace.

b) How can we encourage migrants and refugees to start their own businesses and participate in industry?

1. The Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation can develop and hold intensive courses about starting your own business targeted at migrant and refugee participants across Queensland.
2. The Department of Employment, Economic Development can provide further support with business planning to migrant and refugee participants.
3. The Queensland Government in co-operation with a financial institution, can administer small business loans targeted at migrant and refugee participants.

Equitable Access to Services

Question 2

a) How can we inform culturally diverse groups about the services available in their local communities?

1. The regional staff of Queensland government departments should participate actively in regional multicultural networks and contribute to the projects of these networks. This applies in particular to departments that provide direct service to clients, such as child safety, housing and health.
2. The Department of Communities in each region co-ordinates a regional strategy involving all government departments providing services in the region, to reach and communicate with culturally diverse groups.
3. All government departments have a statewide translation of information strategy and this translated information from all departments is available to the public through a single on-line access point (in addition to the other access points). A similar model to this is in operation in Victoria – the Victorian Government Health Information website. However this concept spans across all government areas.

b) How can services identify and respond to the changing needs of diverse communities?

1. All government departments must report annually to Parliament in meeting the objectives of the Multicultural Policy.
2. All government departments must gather data on cultural and linguistically diverse populations in order to plan for services that are culturally appropriate.
3. All government departments who fund organizations must develop flexible funding streams that are available directly to CALD community groups to address their own needs. This financial support is provided alongside with community development and administrative support.
4. All government departments who fund organizations allocate CALD targeted funding within all their funded programs.
5. All government departments have a specific section responsible for increasing the cultural competency of the department and ensuring these improvements in cultural competency are delivered state wide (especially in regional areas) and targets are met.
6. The Queensland government adopt a whole of government approach to guarantee the provision and use of fee-free qualified interpreting services to community organizations and a new language services policy to support this commitment.

Specific Issues

Question 3: How can we improve the outcomes for migrants and refugees in:

Education: Consistent and well resourced ESL support for all students throughout Queensland, who speak English as a second language.

Employment: Queensland government to identify the key professional areas, where existing migrants' skills are being not used, for example: health, nursing, engineering, business ect. Once the key areas are identified, deliver government funded/subsidized TAFE based programs to support these skilled people to gain overseas qualification recognition, Australian workplace experience and job placement support.

For young people, to improve their employment outcomes, ensure that culturally diverse young people and their families, with the use of an interpreter, participate in the school based Senior Education and Training (SET) planning process so their educational options and career pathways are correctly understood. Education Queensland to develop or adapt employment pathways to suit migrant and refugee students in their senior years of learning. For example combining apprenticeships/ traineeships with ESL support, combining school based learning with TAFE ESL learning or other innovative options that address the particular barriers migrant and refugee students who wish to transition from education into employment may face.

Promotion of Multiculturalism

Question 4: How can we better promote multiculturalism and the benefits of cultural diversity?

1. Queensland government departments to set percentage based benchmarks for the employment of CALD people, so that the government departments are a reflection of the benefits of cultural diversity
2. The message of multiculturalism needs to explicitly recognize the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages which provide the foundation for our diversity.
3. The message of multiculturalism must include all people, including "white Australians", who do not currently identify themselves as part of multicultural Queensland.
4. Multicultural Affairs Queensland to consistently distribute stories, profiles and interest pieces to the mainstream media to ensure that the widespread benefits that Multiculturalism brings to Queensland are given the media coverage they deserve.

How can we help newly arrived migrants and refugees to feel part of the Queensland community?

1. Implement community development programs that aim to connect newly arrived communities with the people within their own; neighbourhoods, educational institutions and sporting and community groups, in open, social and nonthreatening ways. Settlement support is individual and family focused, but for neighbourhood cohesion and acceptance a local community development approach needs to be taken.

The Principles of Multiculturalism

Question 5

The principles of multiculturalism should include:

- a) Freedom for all people to practice their culture and religion within the context of the Australian law.
- b) Opportunity for all people to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and political life within Queensland.
- c) Responsibility to the democratic system and to respect the rights of individuals.
- d) Multiculturalism is essential to participate in the global economy and benefits everyone.

Nambour Community Centre supports specific legislation to formally recognize these processes.

To implement the Multicultural Policy each government department must have a section responsible for implementing the policy across the department and throughout the regional areas.

Other Important Areas

Question 6: Are there any other areas that a multicultural policy should focus on?

Racism and Discrimination: Racism and discrimination remains a real issue that exists within government institutions, businesses and the community. The policy needs to acknowledge this and proactive strategies to address this must to be implemented as an essential component of all cultural responsiveness strategies.

Culturally Significant Spaces: Culturally appropriate and significant public spaces, such as the Maota Fono (Village Meeting House) in Caboolture are very significant in shaping how people perceive Queensland and in providing cultural groups public recognition. Multicultural Affairs Queensland needs to work with local councils and urban renewal program to incorporate culturally significant spaces into the development of urban spaces and planning.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Queensland Government Multicultural Policy Review process. We hope you take Nambour Community Centres' input into consideration.

Kind regards,



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