

**NATIONAL POLICY FORUM:
MULTICULTURALISM IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM**

BRISBANE 29-30 MARCH 2001

Opening Address

Peter Beattie MP, Premier of Queensland and Minister for Trade

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen. Can I say that I am delighted to see so many people here today and I congratulate you and thank you very much for coming....

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the Queensland Government's first Multicultural Summit and I am particularly delighted, as you gathered from my opening remarks, that you have joined us. As you know my government is strongly committed to multiculturalism. I think it is one of the great strengths of Australia and we are doing everything we can to enhance it, develop it and support it. We need your support to do that. Over the next couple of days you will be considering a number of challenges in progressing multiculturalism and plotting its directions.

We don't claim to have all the fundamental wisdom in government. We have clear strategies, and we are very committed to them, but we are obviously prepared to take on board what people in this room over the next two days have got to say. The theme for the discussions is 'Multicultural Queensland's Policy Programs and Services in a Culturally Diverse Society - Lessons from the Past and Responses for the Future'. It is always long winded in government so you wouldn't expect us to have anything shorter than that, but it does adequately reflect the importance of today so I would urge you to be forthcoming in your views.

Just for the record, and it is important that I say this, Queenslanders come from two hundred different birthplaces, speak more than one hundred and fifty languages and identify with more than one hundred religions. If that is not a culturally diverse society I don't know what is. Too often, particularly in the distant past some of the political debates have not identified that. I want to highlight that today.

In 2004 the Queensland Government increased its funding of the Multicultural Assistance Program to \$3.4 million. We have nearly doubled our allocation to multicultural festivals and projects. We have \$750 000 available in this year's round of grants that will open on 1st May and I encourage communities to apply

for that. We all know that demonstrations of cultural diversity are very important. We actually go out and celebrate it in a very positive and very direct way with the rest of the community. Our multicultural festival will be on for the second year in a row. As you know, Karen and I announced last year that we wanted to celebrate multiculturalism in the most open and direct way that we possibly could.

I am happy to announce that the Queensland multicultural festival will be held in the Roma Street Parkland on October 2 and 3, with the extra day this year devoted to a school program, supported by Education Queensland. The program aims to involve school-aged children in workshops and performances linked to their school curriculum in subjects like the arts, music and social studies.

I want you all to know that my government is totally committed to Queensland's multiculturalism and to its further development right through the state.

I'm sure this summit will help us all further that aim and your deliberations over the next two days will be interesting and fruitful.

It's now my great pleasure to declare this Multicultural Summit officially open.