



HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr PJ Dowling MP (Chair)
Mrs JR Miller MP (Deputy Chair)
Mr SW Davies MP
Mr AS Dillaway MP
Mr JD Hathaway MP
Mrs DC Scott MP
Mr DE Shuttleworth MP

Staff present:

Ms S Cawcutt (Research Director)

PUBLIC HEARING—MULTICULTURAL RECOGNITION BILL

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2012

Brisbane

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Committee met at 2.51 pm

CHAIR: I declare open the public hearing of the Health and Community Services Committee inquiry into the Multicultural Recognition Bill. My name is Peter Dowling and I am chair of the committee and member for Redlands. I also have on my left Steve Davies, member for Capalaba; Dale Shuttleworth, member for Ferny Grove; my deputy chair, Jo-Ann Miller, member for Bundamba; and research director Sue Cawcutt. Next to me on my right are member for Townsville, John Hathaway; Aaron Dillaway, member for Bulimba; and Desley Scott, member for Woodridge.

I would remind those present that these proceedings are similar to parliament and are subject to the Legislative Assembly's Standing Rules and Orders. Mobile phones should be turned off or to silent. Hansard is making a transcript of proceedings and it is the committee's intention to publish the transcript of today's proceedings unless there is good reason not to do so.

The Multicultural Recognition Bill was introduced by the Leader of the Opposition and member for Inala on 23 August. It is similar to a bill that was introduced into the last parliament by the member for Inala. That bill lapsed when the parliament was dissolved before the election earlier this year. We have a number of witnesses who have made submissions. We will hear, first of all, from Warren McMillan and Ms Sally Stewart from the Multicultural Development Association.

McMILLAN, Mr Warren, Chair, Multicultural Development Association

STEWART, Ms Sally, Manager, Community Advocacy and Social Policy, Multicultural Development Association

CHAIR: Would you like to make a short opening statement? We have about 15 minutes.

Mr McMillan: Thank you for the opportunity to present. My name is Warren McMillan and I am the chair of the Multicultural Development Association. I would also like to point out that I wear the hat of being an ambassador for multiculturalism appointed by the Australian Multicultural Council. So in both those capacities I am very happy to speak and support the development of multicultural legislation in Queensland.

The MDA, the Multicultural Development Association, supports the development of multicultural legislation. We wrote to both sides of the House in the previous iteration indicating that support. Our view remains the same; it has not changed. We stand by the submission we put in. The MDA is privileged to support refugees and migrants who come to Queensland to settle and to effectively contribute to the growing of Queensland. We believe that, as a result of that work, multiculturalism is one of Queensland's greatest strengths. Just to give you a small example, last year we provided direct settlement service to 1,298 newly arrived refugees from 77 different cultural identities here in Brisbane, in Rockhampton and in Toowoomba.

In a nutshell, what we said in our submission and what we support is that we believe multiculturalism has worked fantastically well here in Queensland. Of course, we always believed it is a work in progress and it could be strengthened. How do we know it has worked well? There are several reasons we know it has worked well. One is the population change; the data speaks for itself. In 1945 we were three per cent overseas born. The last census says we are 27 per cent overseas born. That is an amazing transition in a country without huge social upheaval. I think a fair bit of that successful transition has been due to effective multicultural policy. We do know, for example, that when we examine the indicators of opportunity in Australia such as housing, employment, education, wealth accumulation and so on and map that across ethnicity indicators, over time we do well in settling migrants and in terms of migrants getting ahead. That is over time. New arrivals still do it hard.

We know that surveys into multiculturalism tend to share a broad support for multiculturalism in Australia—understanding and acceptance of diversity, not fear and distrust. Surveys such as the Scanlon Foundation surveys indicate that. We do know that Australians are much more broadly travelled than they were not so long ago—eight million overseas trips last year, which is one for every three of us, which is quite a remarkable number. We believe Australians are more open and engaging with diversity than they may have been in the past. The anecdotal evidence coming to us in our organisation is that many people tell us how fantastically wonderful it is to be here in this country. We know that multiculturalism is working.

However, there are a couple of things we would like to say. We do not think we can take our success for granted because we know that it is going to cost a lot more to fix up a disaster than it would to prevent it. What we have done so far seems to be working very well. We know that, while it works, it has many gaps. For example, we could say there is a two-speed economy; there is probably two-speed multiculturalism. There are bits of it which are working extremely well, but we encounter every day clients who tell us that they have encountered discrimination, that they have encountered difficulties in accessing public services. There are clearly some things which are not yet working as well as they could.

We know that there is evidence of risk factors which we do need to be alert to. We know that there is evidence of disengagement of some sections of some communities. We know that racism is still alive and well. We know that in some communities there is a lack of interaction and participation in the diversity story. We know also that there are new challenges emerging which the old policy frameworks might not be completely ready for such as the increasing reliance on temporary migration to fill skill shortages whereas the old migration policy was based on the notion of nation building for permanent residents. We need to think through those kinds of emerging issues and we believe multicultural legislation will look at this to do that. We know, for example, we need to position ourselves very well in the context of the emergence of Asia as our major area of co-dependency and we think multicultural legislation will help us do that as well.

To be clear, we think that multiculturalism that I am talking about and that we are talking about at the MDA is a woven package of several things together. First and foremost, it is about reaffirming and building the commitment to support, and participation in, our unifying principles of Australian society. People seem to have anxiety about mentioning the words 'unifying principles'. I do not. I think they are very clear. We have a view that our society is held together by parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, English as a shared language for everybody and equality of men and women. These are some things which hold us together. Multiculturalism should be first and foremost about reaffirming a commitment to and participation in those unifying principles. But it should go on to provide opportunity for everybody, regardless of background, to participate in this wonderful country and to get ahead in this wonderful country and, as part of that, provide equitable access to government services to address the barriers that prevent that kind of access.

We think it is important as well that there be a focus on building interaction and understanding between people from different groups so that the differences between us are actually an opportunity for communication rather than an opportunity for conflict and that there also be a promotion, understanding and adoption of civic responsibilities in our shared space. We also believe that part of that multicultural package is an investment in and a promotion of the business dividends which can be reaped from a multicultural society and the opportunities that are provided to us through global connections, through language and cultural understanding that migrants provide.

Importantly, we should continue to build a strong sense of belonging and engagement for all Australians to the Australian nation and community. This is the type of multiculturalism that we talk about, and we think multicultural legislation could help to define that very clearly. We think there are roles for everybody in our community in promoting this work. There are roles for all levels of government. There are roles for community organisations such as ours. There are roles for business and academia, community leadership for schools and so on. We believe multicultural legislation would give sharp focus to the work of everybody in building a multicultural society.

So why legislation? We think these things, of course, can be done without legislation. That is how we have done it so far in Queensland and, as I said, we think it has worked reasonably well. But why legislation? One, it would give sharp focus to everybody who is working on this agenda; two, we think it would be a fantastic statement of leadership by the Queensland government. It would be a statement of definition which would define and describe what we are talking about when we talk about multiculturalism. Given the endless debates we seem to have about that word, that might be a useful thing because the word is so often misunderstood in ways which are often misinterpreted. It has got nothing to do with the way that we have developed that model here in Australia.

Another reason is that it would be a very useful enabling tool for communities to perceive their own advocacy on behalf of their own interests and would be a stronger impetus to the delivery of public services that address cultural and language barriers in the current policy model. We think it also might establish strong review mechanisms which enable greater accountability for the delivery of public services. I think also it would promote a view to the world of Queensland as a globally connected, diversity friendly place which is open for business to the diverse world. We see great value in progressing the multicultural agenda with legislation. Of course, the population mix is changing rapidly and the Australian model of multiculturalism has, indeed, given us a considerable head start in positioning ourselves in that change, but with legislation we believe we can take the next step in progressing that agenda. That is a shortened version of what I have to say.

CHAIR: We have about two minutes left. Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: In relation to the consultation for the legislation, do you believe that that consultation has been adequate?

Ms Stewart: There were a number of consultations that MDA led in preparation for that, and that included quite a number of communities. I think it would be timely to have another round of consultation again to talk about current issues that are happening in the community.

Mrs MILLER: Talking about current issues, today at one of my schools was graffiti 'white power' and another one 'black scum, die'. I think you are right about the fact that Queensland should have legislation that is absolutely directed so that people know exactly the type of community that we have here. Are there any other comments that you would like to make in relation to this legislation or how quickly it should be debated in the parliament?

Mr McMillan: My view is that we have done reasonably well. I do not see this as necessarily a make-or-break game. It is a direction in which we need to head, in my view. The more we engage people in the conversation about an understanding of who we are as a community, the less we will see that kind of stuff on school walls.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time this afternoon and for your submission. I understand you are seeking leave to provide us with some documentation, a CD and an annual report. Is leave granted that that be tabled? Leave is granted. Thank you very much for your time here today and your submission.

WORRALL, Mrs Tracy, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma

CHAIR: Tracy, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mrs Worrall: Thank you for the opportunity to present today. I will start by congratulating the government on taking forward this bill that was introduced last year and then went into abeyance. It is a good thing to see. I would like to start with the role of QPASTT. QPASTT stands for the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma. We are a state-wide agency and we have locations in five different sites around Queensland. We are a specialist agency. We only work with people from refugee backgrounds and with people from refugee backgrounds who have experienced torture or trauma prior to arrival in Australia.

In saying that, we worked with people from over 51 different ethnic communities last year. We are a unique agency. We are one of eight across Australia and we work with people from straight after arrival, including people who arrive as asylum seekers, right through to people who may have been here 30 or 40 years but who still have or are refigured around some aspects of their prior experiences to arrival in Australia. So we do not work with the entire multicultural community; we work only with people who have come here under the refugee or humanitarian programs or who have had refugee-like experiences.

I would like to support a lot of what Warren from MDA was just saying. I will not go through all of that, but I would like to support the value of multiculturalism and also some issues around what may or may not be working. Again, I would support what MDA has said.

The issues that we feel are important in terms of targeting legislation or the importance of legislation are issues like having equitable access for people from different communities. We are aware that Queensland is one state that does not have legislation. A number of other states, including New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, do and we believe that it is a platform for multiculturalism and for social cohesion and it allows the government to provide leadership over the type of communities that we would like to see in our society. But the legislation itself also supports service delivery that enables us to meet the different needs of some of those communities.

In terms of our own target group, we would say that there is some important distinctions that we would like to see mirrored in any discussion around that. That is around the needs of new and emerging communities, which are sometimes quite different from the needs of people who have been in Australia for some period of time but who still fall under that culturally diverse banner. Certainly, we would like to see the needs of people who have experienced torture and trauma prior to arrival being able to be incorporated into state government programs and policy decisions, because that impacts on people's capacity to settle and sometimes it impacts on their capacity to access services. So in terms of equality of access, that becomes quite important.

In terms of what we think are the dangers, I suppose, of not having legislation to back that, there are not targeted resources and there are not targeted strategies that will necessarily meet the needs of some of the people who we work with. We think that the absence of accountability around that allows people to not meet those needs unless they are particularly interested in doing so. We would be particularly interested in a mechanism for communities to be able to articulate their needs and issues with government. Some of those are things like the needs for funding and the appropriate use of interpreters. We work with clients every day who are unable to access services because of the unavailability of interpreters. That often happens because of the lack of funding for those interpreters but also the importance that service providers and government agencies put upon the use of interpreters. It affects people we work with every day. For example, our schoolkids come home with a letter from the school that indicates a concern about someone's performance—right down to being expelled from school. Of course, it is written in English and the child is used by the parent to interpret the letter. I do not know about you, but any child I know is not going to say, 'Hey, mum I've just been expelled from school.' So if the information does not get through to parents, then we have a problem. We are turning what is potentially a small proportion of the population into a large percentage of the problem. That is what we need to try to not do as a society.

I think for us the other major issue is the collection of data in terms of being able to know where we are going as a society. We are very poor at collecting accurate and appropriate data. Without some whole-of-government attempts around that, we will continue to do so. At the moment, most data out of government or government agencies is collected around country of birth or being overseas born. That is not a very good indicator of needs when we want to target programs and services. I was born overseas, but I do not know if I need particularly targeted services and service provision around my needs. Generally, we would like to say that we support the bill and we would like to see the bill be able to reflect the type of society that we would like. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you. Are there any questions from committee members?

Mr DAVIES: Mrs Worrall, I have a friend who is a Sudanese person. He is quite prominent in the Sudanese community. One of the things that he talks about—and these are his words—is that many Sudanese people just feel dumped. There is not a lot of services that back them up, and particularly I am talking about trauma and torture. From some of the stories that these young men particularly talk about is it

any wonder they are traumatised. Far more refugees are coming in with traumatic stories from areas such as Afghanistan, yet there does not seem to be a lot of funding—you talked about that before—federally at least.

Mrs Worrall: We are primarily funded by the federal government. We are funded through the Department of Health and Ageing nationally and it is a specific program for survivors of torture and trauma. Our funding increases along with any increase in the settlement component. So every time the settlement component increases, so does our funding. The reality for us as a service, though, is that we would still see people who arrived in Australia 40 years ago. For example, a number of our clients came out from the former Yugoslavia or from Central or South America, or South-East Asia. So the intake changes and the population of people we could see continues to grow. But our funding is primarily Commonwealth. The Queensland government provides a very small amount of money to us, but the Commonwealth does.

Mrs MILLER: Tracy, you might be interested to know that we as MPs do not have access to interpreter services. So if someone from a multicultural community comes to us as a member of parliament with an issue, we cannot assist them because we do not have access to interpreter services, which I think is disgraceful. The other interesting thing is in relation to police liaison officers. My understanding is that there is a review of the Samoan liaison officers, police liaison officers and Sudanese police liaison officers with a view to cutting them out, which, again, I suppose will have more impact on your service. The other issue, too—and I am sure this will start off soon—will be in terms of education. We have particular education liaison officers as well. You gave the example of a student coming home from school. Where you have those liaison officers there they can interpret that direct to the parents. My view is that, if this bill is not passed through this parliament as a matter of human rights, or all of those backups are not put in place across police, education, health, et cetera, this state will be going backwards. It certainly will not be going forwards. I was just wondering if you had any comments to make on that?

Mrs Worrall: Where do I start? I think it is very unfortunate that you do not have access to interpreters. I would say that is a good starting point for any democracy. Everyone should have access to those—

Mrs MILLER: We are told there is no money, of course.

Mrs Worrall: But neither do a whole range of others. One of the things for us in the use of interpreters is that it is often allocated as a general funding pool. So services then have to prioritise across a whole range of needs. In child protection, for example, it is allocated as a group funding that might be used on a whole range of different services for a particular child or a range of children. Sometimes it slips to a lower priority. People like allied health professionals have no access to health interpreters in our current health system. So there is a whole range of issues. I would agree that more funding needs to be allocated to interpreters. It is a basic right to be able to access services.

I did not know about the review of police liaison officers. We work very closely with police liaison officers. So we will probably try to find some information about that. We would be very disturbed to see that happen. One of the issues that we work closely with them on and with communities on is around older younger people who are disengaging from school. We are trying to put in place preventive programs around that.

Mrs MILLER: And, of course, in relation to that the employment programs have also not been funded, either.

Mrs Worrall: I understand that is the case, yes

Mrs MILLER: Yes.

CHAIR: It is probably worth clarifying that it is the member's opinion on a number of those issues that were flagged and she is entitled to them. A question, Desley?

Mrs MILLER: It is a matter of fact.

Mrs SCOTT: I hope that the trauma and counselling services are still alive and well and work with Access services.

Mrs Worrall: Yes, it is.

Mrs SCOTT: One of the community groups that arrived earlier—and I guess they are not entitled to services now, but they still have great issues—are the Cambodians. They came before we really had the settlement services and so on. I am just wondering whether you pick up on these people. Then, of course, in more recent times the most disadvantaged group, not particularly for trauma, are the Pacific Islanders. I am just wondering whether the number of services are there to fulfil the need, because we hear many of the most traumatic stories. Over the weekend we had a function in the area and it is heart wrenching.

Mrs Worrall: Yes, we hear many, many heart-wrenching stories. We still absolutely do see people from the Cambodian community and they are eligible for our services. A lot of people from that community do not access external services. It is a community that is particularly self-sufficient, if you like, or seek services internally, but they are eligible. They, of course, arrived before torture and trauma services. We have been around for about 19 years, but they arrived before our services. But they are certainly still eligible. Unfortunately, the Pacific Islander community is not available for our services, because they are migrants; they are not people from refugee backgrounds. But they are eligible for other services.

In terms of the scope of need we have between a six-month and an eight-month waiting list for our services. But we work with people and we have mechanisms in place to support people while they are on the waiting list.

Mrs SCOTT: Yes.

Mr HATHAWAY: I take it your key issue, if you had to say there was one, is translation and interpretation services. Has the federal government's program that has usually been provided been at the same level or have you seen a reduction in the resources allocated by the federal government in this regard?

Mrs Worrall: In interpreters or in our service provision?

Mr HATHAWAY: In the service provision or translation and interpretation services provided by the federal government—the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

Mrs Worrall: The federal government provides for some of our services free interpreting. So we access TIS and that is for free. In some of our other service provision we pay for interpreters and the federal government allocates sufficient funding in our funding grants to do that. So the current position of the translating and interpreting service is that people must pay for that service. So either we get allocated additional funding in some grants or we can access free interpreting. Currently, with the Queensland government funding, we have access through SWITC, which is a different interpreting service. So we can access interpreting at the moment and the funding we do not actually acquit, if you like. We do not account for it. It grows or decreases as we use it. However, very few people have access to that type of provision from the federal government and they will not fund Queensland government funded services to access TIS. The Queensland government has to pay for that.

Mr HATHAWAY: Okay. Thank you.

Mr DAVIES: And previously the Queensland government did fund that?

Mrs Worrall: And still. The Queensland government will fund interpreter services through TIS. It is just about how much take-up there is, including a take-up by Queensland government's direct service delivery. It is a very low take-up.

CHAIR: Thank you. The time has now elapsed, I am afraid, Dale. Did you have something short?

Mr SHUTTLEWORTH: No, it is not really short.

CHAIR: All right. Thank you, Dale. Thank you very much for your submission and for your time here today.

VAYANI, Mr Hamza, Executive Officer, Mental Health in Multicultural Australia

CHAIR: Would you like to commence with a brief opening statement?

Mr Vayani: Thank you very much for inviting me here today. The Mental Health in Multicultural Australia program is a nationally funded program through the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. Our remit is around promoting improved access and improved treatment outcomes for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) accessing mental health programs. We have a broad mandate around stigma reduction, so that CALD communities can access those services more effectively, and also around improving cultural competence in the workforce to be able to engage with those groups.

Specifically in relation to the Multicultural Recognition Bill here in Queensland, MHiMA welcomes the concept of establishing a Multicultural Recognition Bill and notes that such an approach is in place in other jurisdictions across Australia. We support the objectives of the bill in terms of recognising diversity of people in Queensland, promoting a united, harmonious and inclusive community, and ensuring government services are responsive to the diversity of the people of Queensland. Obviously there is a clear social and moral benefit to this. There is also an economic benefit to this in terms of ensuring that all of our communities are able to partake and contribute effectively to the state.

We do, however, believe that the objectives of the bill could do with further development and perhaps be broadened to ensure there is explicit focus on ensuring that this bill allows for improvement in outcomes for the multicultural communities accessing civic employment opportunities, skills development and, of course, both public and private sector services. And obviously in our case, our remit is around mental health and suicide prevention.

Whilst the intent of the bill around promoting cultural diversity is of value, we want to ensure that newly arrived communities or long-term communities are supported through the commission type structure. We note that that is in place in other jurisdictions and is not proposed at this time. We note that we are in a climate where resources have to be balanced. We note that a committee is likely to be established. Whilst we support the notion of what has been put forward, we would want to make sure that that committee, if it is to proceed in that form, is able to access expert advice in order to progress and make sure that the committee and this bill are meaningful and able to progress beyond being a statement of intent.

We note that there is a requirement to produce an action plan. We are concerned that, whilst there is an action plan, there appear to be no statutory duties embedded to make reporting mandatory or any clear powers to investigate or require organisations to put in place remedial measures to ensure services meet the needs of diverse multicultural communities should that need eventuate. We recognise that, in the context of the funding environment we are in, this is certainly a step in the right direction. Whilst we may have a committee in place and whilst we may be talking about putting in place processes to ensure that agencies are accountable to ensure the needs of multicultural communities are met, we would not be wanting the bill to be moving in a direction where it adds to burdensome reporting requirements. So we suggest it should be something that is proportionate. Currently there are statutory requirements in place through, for example, the Anti-Discrimination Commission here in Queensland and the Health Quality and Complaints Commission around healthcare issues, and we would be keen to see the bill, if it does proceed—noting the context we are in and noting our support for it—integrated into existing legislative mechanisms so that it is part of an integrated range of measures that ensure access, equity and opportunity are available to all in our state.

Mr SHUTTLEWORTH: I am actually quite happy that I ran out of time last time, because my question is probably more relevant to what you have said to this point. I do not doubt that everyone here is in support of promoting multiculturalism and in support of accepting and integrating communities from multicultural and diverse countries into our own and strengthening as a result of that. But you touched on a point that I was going to raise. That is, in the way the bill is currently written, it seems not to actually achieve a great deal when the application of the act does not impose any obligations on anyone, it seems. I am not questioning the validity of or the necessity for recognising multiculturalism; I am just proposing that the bill in its current form does not actually achieve a great deal of those outcomes. If we are to establish a council and establish a chair position, how would that accountability be transferred forward in its best form?

Mr Vayani: I think the measures around developing an action plan are helpful, but actually making sure there are requirements—that those action plans are reported upon and that there is an actual requirement for that to happen—would be helpful and over time would allow us to demonstrate improvement. You need to have a baseline.

I do not think anybody here is against the spirit of what is intended; I think we are all supportive of it. I think it is important to look at what mechanisms and provisions currently exist and ensure that this bill is actually integrated into those measures explicitly. I do not see that there. I am not saying that we should be promoting the regulatory burden more than is necessary, but I think it is a bit devoid and isolated from what currently exists. So I think there is some room for improvement and further consideration in that regard.

Mrs MILLER: Dale, I did not realise you were in the wets of the Liberal Party, but anyway. So are you proposing a bill of human rights or a charter of human rights such as was in Victoria? I am just taking this one step further, given your notation there.

CHAIR: This is Mr Vayani's presentation; it is not Dale's presentation.

Mrs MILLER: I know. It just would help me to know if that is what you are talking about.

CHAIR: You either have a question for Mr Vayani or you do not.

Mrs MILLER: Mr Vayani, you would be familiar with the charter of human rights that was brought into Victoria several years ago. I think what Mr Shuttleworth is talking about is something along those lines. Are you suggesting that, if this bill is passed, that would be another step in that direction, which is what Mr Shuttleworth is talking about?

Mr Vayani: Look, potentially. Clearly, this is something that is about our jurisdiction here in Queensland, but certainly a human rights approach is something we would support. But ultimately I think what we need to be mindful of is, again, I guess, our context and the regulatory environment that we have. What I am suggesting is that what we have in its current form, whilst well expressed in terms of an intent, needs to go that step further in terms of being integrated with what might exist. So it could potentially be a Victorian model; it could be actually taking into account other mechanisms that already exist and making that explicit link here in Queensland.

Mrs MILLER: I look forward to working with you on that.

Mrs SCOTT: Thank you very much for your presentation. When I look at a lot of the refugees in my area I marvel at their resilience—at how those who have come through the most dreadful torture and deprivation can really get on with their lives here. Their children blossom in school and have a huge thirst for education and so on. When you look at mental health, how widespread is that amongst our refugees?

Mr Vayani: It is actually a very interesting question. We have actually just completed a piece of work—it is not actually in the public domain at the moment—on the prevalence of mental health issues amongst new arrivals. It is actually very interesting in that in Australia, at the state and the national level, we do not actually have an accurate idea of the prevalence within those communities. Quite simply, there is a very basic issue here: we actually do not collect the data in a systematic way to be able to analyse that. For example, I can point you to the national mental health survey, which in its basic form would allow us to break down statistically the types of communities that are in Australia through our census data. But other than that, in terms of their access and their treatment outcomes or their educational outcomes, we do not have that data. We have actually produced a discussion paper, which is under embargo at the moment—that will be released soon—and that actually highlights that we are not even able to have that conversation on an evidence basis because, quite simply, we do not have the methodology and structure in place to ensure that data is collected.

Mrs SCOTT: If you present a report to us, we would love to see it.

Mr Vayani: Sure.

Mr HATHAWAY: Both you and the previous two presenters said that we do do things well in Queensland.

Mr Vayani: Sure.

Mr HATHAWAY: I would be interested to know what we are doing well and the key area in which we are not doing well. I am also interested in data collection, which seems to be a common theme. Most of the data seems to be derived from national statistics.

Mr Vayani: In terms of the things we are doing well in Queensland, I think we have a whole lot of policy and action plans out there that express a real, genuine commitment at various levels, from senior government down to managers who manage services. I guess the issue really is about making sure that whatever resources we invest around making our services accessible to CALD communities are actually reaching the target groups effectively, and that then leads on to the point around data that you asked me about. I think that is the area where we are necessarily not doing as well as we might, both at the state level and at the federal level. I think there would be acknowledgement around that. At a time when we are looking at using tax dollars as effectively as we might, it seems crazy not to have the mechanisms to be able to assess who these services are going to. I would argue that in some senses we are probably not getting the best return on our investment by not knowing where we direct that because we do not have the information. So if we are talking about moving from a situation where we have well-intentioned sentiment to one where we are actually making a difference to people, which is what I would argue we are all in the business of doing, then actually having the information that says, 'This is where it is needed. This is where we are going to have the most impact,' is an area of work that I would be really keen for this jurisdiction, along with others, to pursue, to get the best return on our tax dollars to support these communities.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Vayani for your submission and for your contribution and time here today. We have reached the end of the time allotted for our hearing about this bill. We thank our witnesses for their contribution.

Committee adjourned at 3.27 pm