



Council Commends Paul Papalia's Appointment as Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests

The Ethnic Communities' Council of WA warmly welcomes the appointment of the Hon Paul Papalia as the new Minister for Minister for Defence Issues, Tourism, Citizenship and Multicultural Interests. "Whilst Mr. Papalia, unlike his two predecessors was born in Western Australia, we commend Premier McGowan for giving him the portfolio responsibility for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests in addition to Defence Issues and Tourism as we believe he is very well equipped for it," said Council President Ramdas Sankaran.

In his Inaugural Speech, Mr Papalia observed, "optimism and hope are things I have encountered constantly throughout my short but very crowded political life. My Navy service as a clearance diver has shaped who I am. Mateship, determination, courage and an abiding sense of humour distinguish the clearance diver. The answer to the journalist's question of why would I become a politician is simple. Given the opportunity, I felt obliged to step forward." He also conveyed, "I also believe there are many good men and women on both sides of politics. I believe that all those who enter this place do so with the intention of doing good and serving their community. The vast majority of members maintain that focus and contribute greatly to the betterment of our society. I believe it is essential that we attract good aspirants to political life from as many walks of life as possible. Therefore, faced with the opportunity to contribute, I simply had no choice."

"Such qualities and commitment will endear him to ALL Western Australians and not just those of CaLD background". It will also hopefully end the partisan approach that his two predecessors adopted to this portfolio", said Mr. Sankaran.

"Most importantly, his own ethnic and family backgrounds (which he recounted in his inaugural speech) epitomise the significant contributions that people of CaLD backgrounds have made to Australia and Western Australia in particular. His grandfather migrated from Italy, spoke English with a broad accent and preferred to speak to his friends in his mother tongue. His wife wore traditional clothing that many Australians found to be dark and strange looking and their children were born in Australia. Their family was viewed with a little suspicion by other Australians and when Australia joined the world war in which many of the man's former countrymen were on the opposing side he was removed from his family and jailed. A little over half a century since his grandfather's imprisonment, as a potential terrorist, Mr Papalia was elected to the WA parliament after a distinguished military career lasting 26 years, during which time he became a Navy Clearance Diver, served in the counter terrorist squadron of the Special Air Service Regiment, was deployed twice to Iraq on operations and was awarded the Conspicuous Service Cross in 1994."

Equally important are his views on terrorism conveyed in his inaugural speech. "I am not soft on terrorists. I love my country and will willingly do anything to defend it against a threat. However, I am gravely concerned when minority groups are used as scapegoats and targeted for political purposes. I believe the best way to defend this country against internal threats is to promote inclusiveness. Minority groups that feel they are part of society will work to defend it and are best placed to identify rogue elements. Debate on this matter is often led at the federal level, but the impact of that debate and subsequent changes to society are experienced in every state, including this state. By isolating people we fuel discontent and risk missing out on potentially significant contributions from future generations. I believe it is the role of government to exercise good leadership and assist everybody to make a full contribution to society."

Multiculturalism was at its zenith in this state during the term of the Gallop government. Given his aforementioned knowledge, skills, traits, experience and commitment, our Council believes that Mr. Papalia is very well placed to reverse the institutional racism that was perpetuated by Messrs Castrilli and Nahan in their capacity as Ministers for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests and usher in another golden era for Multiculturalism and we look forward to working with him", said Mr. Sankaran.

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