As a precursor to the launch of a new multicultural policy next year, the Northern Territory Government has decided to rename the Office of Ethnic Affairs as the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

Speaking after a short swearing-in ceremony to reflect the new title of his portfolio responsibility, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Kon Vatskalis, said it was a subtle but significant change that recognised the inclusiveness of cultural diversity in our community.

“The term ‘ethnic’ has increasingly been regarded as divisive, highlighting the differences between sectors of our community rather than bringing people together in cultural harmony,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“In the Territory, we are proud of our unique lifestyle and the many cultures that have contributed to our past and present. We will continue to ensure that our multicultural communities are supported in expressing and sharing their individual traditions and heritage into the future.

“For several months, I have been working in close cooperation with various stakeholders on the development of a new multicultural policy for the Northern Territory, and one of the recommendations endorsed by Government as part of that process is today’s renaming.

“I expect the new policy will be ready for launching early next year, but in the meantime, I have decided it would be appropriate to formalise the name change as quickly as possible,” he said.

“I’m delighted that when I open the new premises of the Multicultural Council of the NT (MCNT) next week, I will be doing it as Minister for Multicultural Affairs.”