



Australian Government
Department of Immigration
and Citizenship

An abstract graphic consisting of numerous overlapping circles in various colors (blue, yellow, pink, grey, green) arranged to form the outline of the Australian continent. The circles vary in size and opacity, creating a textured, dot-matrix effect. The graphic is set against a background of thin, curved lines in light grey and yellow.

Access and Equity

in Government Services

Report 2006–08

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Enquiries about this report can be made to the Director, Multicultural Policy Section, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 5 Chan Street, Belconnen ACT 2617, telephone 02 6198 7225 or fax 02 6198 7221.

This report is also available on the Department of Immigration and Citizenship website at www.immi.gov.au.

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Australian Government
Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Secretary

12 March 2009

Senator Chris Evans
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Access and Equity Report 2006–08

I am pleased to present the *Access and Equity Report 2006–08*.

This report has been prepared by the department in accordance with Recommendation 30 of the *Access and Equity Evaluation Report 1992*.

I recommend that you table this report in parliament and that it be made available to members of the House of Representatives and senators.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Metcalfe'.

Andrew Metcalfe

people our business

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< Welcome Wall.

The people named on the Welcome Wall have come from more than 130 countries, and have all brought to modern Australia vivid memories of their homes elsewhere and their homelands' distinctive cultures.

Photograph courtesy Australian National Maritime Museum

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Preface

To a large extent, Australia owes its success as a free and democratic society and a thriving economy to the outstanding contributions that migrants and their families have made throughout our history. Immigration will continue to play a key role in meeting the economic and social challenges we face in the foreseeable future.

To make the most of migrants' and all Australians' skills, perspectives, networks and desire to succeed, everyone must have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to our society.

Access and equity is fundamental to this. Under the Access and Equity Strategy, government programs and services are encouraged to be responsive to the needs of all Australians, irrespective of their place of birth, cultural or linguistic backgrounds or religious beliefs.

Access and equity reporting is an important part of the Access and Equity Strategy. It demonstrates how government agencies are meeting challenges, sharing innovations and providing leadership to the whole community about the importance of fair, inclusive and effective programs and services. Cultural, linguistic and religious diversity can present particular challenges for older Australians, women and Humanitarian Program entrants. This *Access and Equity Report 2006–08* highlights their needs and responses by government agencies.

This report focuses more than previous reports on community feedback in order to better understand the barriers to service delivery. Views were sought from the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, the Refugee Council of Australia and the Australian Human Rights Commission, and through my department's nationwide network of community liaison officers. Key barriers to access and equity are detailed in the report and more specific information obtained through community feedback will inform discussions between my department and a range of agencies.

After setting the scene from the community perspective, the report looks at government achievements in access and equity. It features examples from Australian Government agencies and state, territory and local governments.

Many agencies have shown a strong commitment to providing programs and services that are accessible and responsive to diversity. The report lists many innovative approaches, ranging from listening tours and partnerships between governments to sharing the insights of specialised multicultural officers with other agencies.

I congratulate these agencies and encourage a continued whole-of-government approach to this important area of public policy.



Senator Chris Evans

Minister for Immigration and Citizenship

Message

I welcome the release of the *Access and Equity Report 2006–08*. Government agencies deserve recognition for developing their programs and services in response to Australia's evolving cultural diversity.

We can all rightfully be proud of our successful multicultural country, which reflects our forebears' resilience and their commitment to building a better life for themselves and their children. We benefit socially and economically from the cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of the Australian population.

As well as benefits, our diversity brings the challenge of designing programs and services that transcend a 'one size fits all' approach. It is crucial that agencies demonstrate creativity and flexibility in catering effectively to the needs of all Australians. This will help make our public sector more effective and create the opportunities for everyone to make the most of their lives and contribute to the nation.

I encourage government, community and business organisations to read this report. It sets out some of the challenges we face in providing access and equity for all Australians. I also hope it provides some inspiration and encouragement through the approaches featured, which have resulted in fairer and more responsive programs and services throughout Australia.

Those readers interested in exploring examples further should contact the respective agencies for additional information.



Laurie Ferguson MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services