

Part one

1.1 *Charter* implementation in 1999 - An overview

This year saw an improvement in the reporting on the implementation of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* (the *Charter*) across most departments and agencies. There was a significant increase in the number of agencies assessing the impacts of programs and services through the use of performance indicators and measuring results against benchmarks or intended outcomes. In addition to increasing their focus on outputs and outcomes, departments and agencies also performed well in terms of embedding the *Charter* in the way they plan or deliver services.

Many departments and agencies increased their focus on client feedback, particularly through the introduction of Client Service Charters and the use of technological innovation, and used this information to improve service delivery. There was also an increase in the amount and quality of information on client satisfaction obtained through surveys, consultation and complaint handling mechanisms.

These developments can be seen as a response to a request by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP, in May 1999 that departments and agencies provide clearer reporting on *Charter* outcomes. They can also be seen in light of other related government initiatives, including those by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) during the year to promote the message of the *Charter* and the need for better reporting on its implementation throughout the Commonwealth, States/Territories and the community sector. DIMA organised a series of national training workshops, information sessions and an information kit.

As requested, agencies reported this year on their implementation of each of the seven *Charter* principles: access, equity, communication, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability. Detailed reporting against each principle is at Part 2.1.

The *Charter* summarises seven principles central to the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation and reporting of quality government services in a culturally diverse society. From the reports by departments and agencies, highlights in these functional areas are outlined below.

Design of programs and services

Departments and agencies have used a range of innovative strategies and initiatives to incorporate the *Charter* principles into strategic design and planning processes. Examples include:

- DIMA's *Access and Equity Plan 1999-2001: Implementing the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* was launched on 16 February 1999. The Plan provides a framework for embedding the *Charter's* service principles into DIMA's management practices;

-
- Among a wide range of strategies to meet its commitments under the *Charter*, Centrelink made a public commitment to providing high quality service to customers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in its *Delivering Multicultural Services 1999-2003* statement;
 - The Department of Health and Aged Care embraced the principles of the *Charter* in both the design and delivery of its programs, including in its Multipurpose Services which funds flexible rural aged care services specifically targeted at, among others, older people from different cultural backgrounds and older Indigenous peoples;
 - A number of agencies reported on the development of systems for inter-agency exchange of data to facilitate planning. For example, the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) will have access to data on the Department of Family and Community Services' FAMnet system, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) has improved its mechanism for the exchange of data with client organisations;
 - The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) employed a broad range of strategies and services, some aimed at meeting the electoral needs of identified access and equity groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
 - AGD uses its Legal Aid Statistical Information System Information Exchange and the National Information System to provide data for analysis for improving access to legal services for targeted groups and areas;
 - The Department of the Treasury continued to be committed to access and equity in policy formulation, recognising that its mission is to improve the overall wellbeing of the Australian people;
 - Relevant *Charter* objectives have been included in the Department of Defence's *Workplace Equity and Diversity Plan 1998-2001*. Reporting mechanisms have been included to ensure that the Plan is achievable and that key players are accountable; and
 - The National Museum of Australia, in addition to reporting on access and equity activities in the Museum's Annual Report to Parliament, built access and equity strategies into the Museum's Corporate and Operational Plans. Formal program evaluation systems are being developed.

Service delivery

Departments and agencies have continued to increase their focus on improving service delivery. Reports from many departments and agencies reflected an increased awareness of the needs of Indigenous Australians including developing mechanisms to strengthen the relevance of their services to Indigenous communities. For example, the Department of Family and Community Services' Indigenous Relationship Support Initiative was established to develop models of service delivery that are culturally appropriate for Indigenous families. The importance of cross-cultural training for staff and usage of more effective communication mechanisms have been emphasised.

Cross-cultural training

- Centrelink is developing innovative multimedia approaches to learning materials on multicultural issues, and has available a video and training package, *Working With Interpreters*. The package won the open category in the 1998 Australian Public Service (APS) Workplace Diversity Awards and has been sold to many government and non-government agencies.
- The Australia Council provided Indigenous cultural awareness training for all staff during 1998–1999 as part of its new National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Policy.

Communication

- The Government Communication Unit of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) encouraged departments and agencies to address the diverse needs of special audiences when designing research, public relations or advertising campaigns.
- Departments and agencies utilised press, radio, television and information technology to inform and raise awareness of available services for eligible clients. Additionally, an array of publications were produced, including kits, booklets and videos, and avenues such as surveys, freecall telephone numbers, forums, and specific projects were pursued in seeking client views and feedback.
 - For example: Centrelink's participation in Telstra's trial of 70 Multimedia Payphones located in shopping centres, airports and Centrelink Customer Service Centres; the Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts' online database on disability-related information in 17 languages other than English; an information kit on Australia's Indigenous peoples which was forwarded to every overseas post, and a cross-cultural kit covering 11 countries for officers being posted produced by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT); and the Australian Federal Police (AFP) initiative of a Multilingual Badges Program to identify those police officers who are fluent in community languages.

-
- Centrelink's regular client consultations include convening Value Creation Workshops (VCWs) in order to determine future policy direction. A tailored version for non-English speaking customers was run in the appropriate community language. Customer participants receive a full copy of the workshop report in their own language.
 - The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB) conducted a number of access and equity focused activities in the form of campaigns, corporate strategies, programs, schemes and services. Among other things, an *Outworkers Campaign* assisted manufacturers, sub-contractors and outworkers to understand their rights, responsibilities and opportunities under the *Clothing Trades Award* and the *Workplace Relations Act 1996*.

Monitoring and reporting

This year saw a marked increase in the use of quantitative information, statistics, benchmarking and other avenues of monitoring and reporting.

- A number of departments and agencies introduced new monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including for contracted providers. Good practice examples include:
 - Centrelink provides a range of information from its databases to the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) on request, and on a user-pays basis (with some exemptions) to any enquirer, concerning customer attributes such as payment type and country of birth;
 - The Australian Taxation Office's Chief Executive Instructions on Competitive Tendering and Contracting were altered to include the need for proposals for services provided to the community, on behalf of the ATO, to address the *Charter* principles; and
 - The Australian Customs Service (ACS) reported on implementation of the *Charter* in the Social Justice Statement of the *ACS Annual Report*. The report will be available on the ACS Internet site, where particular attention has been given to ensuring access to visually impaired and linguistically diverse clients.
- More departments and agencies are assessing outcomes through the use of performance indicators and measuring results against benchmarks or intended outcomes.
 - The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) assesses the performance of organisations under the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) by requiring organisations to annually record outcomes against a set of Project Performance Indicators.

- The Australia Council has produced an Action Plan of strategies and performance indicators for their Arts for a Multicultural Australia Policy.
- Improvements were also noted in the collection and use of client statistics and profile information. Some agencies, such as the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), the Department of Health and Aged Care, the Australia Council and the Health Insurance Commission (HIC), used the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data to establish benchmarks linked to the demographic representation of migrant and Indigenous communities.
 - Such initiatives resulted in useful insights into the effectiveness of strategies to implement the *Charter*; for example, DETYA's Higher Education Equity Program.
- The profile of HIC activities against the *Charter* was promoted in its 1998–99 Annual Report under the national strategic theme of Building Confidence in the HIC.

1.2 Issues for the year 2000 and beyond

Draft Framework on Performance Measurement under the *Charter*

DIMA has developed a draft Framework on *Charter* performance measurement to facilitate a more rigorous assessment process focused on outcomes and longitudinal comparison in consultation with departments and agencies. The draft Framework (Part 4 refers) is based on the Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement Standards Framework produced by the NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission (EAC).

The draft Framework is structured in terms of four mainstream functional/activity areas: planning; policy development; service delivery and implementation; and monitoring, evaluation and reporting. The draft Framework is a self assessment tool, enabling departments and agencies to undertake longitudinal comparison, focus on outcomes, and identify areas for improvement.

The draft Framework can be employed to report on reasons for and methods used to determine the success of strategies and initiatives; for example, the gains made through cooperative arrangements with other agencies and the findings of program and organisational reviews and evaluations. The Framework will be used as a key tool for future reporting on *Charter* implementation. Further refinement of the draft Framework is required, particularly in relation to the precise nature of its usage. DIMA will undertake this work in early 2000 in consultation with departments and agencies.

The *Charter* and diversity management

On 5 May 1999 the Prime Minister launched the report of the National Multicultural Advisory Council (NMAC) *Australian multiculturalism for a new century: Towards inclusiveness*. The Government has responded to this report, as outlined in the document *A new agenda for multicultural Australia*. Both reports have important implications for access and equity policy.

The most significant development in relation to access and equity policy for the APS is that the Government has accepted the Council's recommendation that APS Values be modified to acknowledge that the Commonwealth Government's clients have diverse backgrounds which need to be addressed in the development and delivery of services to them. Specifically, value 10(1)(g) has been modified to say: the APS delivers services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public and is sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public. This is now included in the *Public Service Act 1999*.

The APS approach to diversity therefore includes both its workforce and its clients. As stated in *A new agenda for multicultural Australia*, the Government believes it is likely there will be a strong link between the effective utilisation of diversity in the workplace and effective client service to a diverse community, and is keen to encourage a holistic approach to the management of diversity.

Given this holistic approach to diversity, the Government is also reviewing the different reporting responsibilities for access and equity (by DIMA), Client Service Charters (by the Department of Finance and Administration) and Workplace Diversity (by the Public Service Commissioner). This review will take into account the differing functions and responsibilities of these agencies, the varying accountability obligations on which the reports are based, the varying aims and coverage of the reports and the differing interests of stakeholders.

The NMAC report also recognises the value of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*. It recommends that private and community sector organisations consider how the *Charter* principles might be relevant to their diversity management and planning processes, and develop similar charters appropriate to their specific environment and the needs of their constituents, customers and employees.

In response, the Government considers that while it cannot be prescriptive about charters or programs for the private sector, where benefit can be derived from adapting the principles of a government program to a company's operations, this ought to be pursued. In this context, it is noted that the Government has taken steps, through its Productive Diversity Partnership Program, to encourage and assist business with respect to the maximisation of diversity dividends. This will be utilised as a means to both increasing the wellbeing of potentially disadvantaged groups and to securing economic growth through increased productivity and competitiveness.

The Productive Diversity Partnership Program is a cooperative venture between the Commonwealth, a group of Australia's foremost business schools and the private sector, including some of Australia's largest and most prominent corporations. Its purpose is to develop curriculum material for business education in both the university and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sectors. This is being done in the first instance by investigating practical workplace diversity issues within participating companies with a view to stimulating discussion and developing resources to assist diversity management and understanding of the issues.

The resource development phase is being undertaken primarily by business education professionals, but is being driven by the practical needs of business. The Government recognises the benefits to business by putting diversity strategies firmly in the context of good business practice, and integrating diversity into more general human resource management and business strategies.

The findings of the resource development phase are to be reported at a Diversity 2000 Conference to be held in late 2000. The outcomes of the Conference will then be further developed into practical curriculum material and management tools for use throughout the university and TAFE sectors. These will also have implications for diversity management in the public sector.

Cultural and language indicators

In May 1996, the Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs noted the problems associated with the use of the term non-English speaking background and its acronym NESB. It agreed that "the term and acronym be dropped, where possible, from all official communications".

In April 1999, the Ministerial Council agreed to endorse and implement a series of recommendations stemming from a report prepared for its consideration, *Suitable Indicators for a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Society: Results from the Cultural and Language Indicators Pilot Study*.

The report recommended the adoption of a minimum core set of cultural and language indicators (country of birth, main language other than English spoken at home, proficiency in spoken English, and Indigenous status) and other cultural and language indicators (such as country of birth of mother and of father, year of arrival in Australia, first language spoken, main language spoken at home, languages spoken at home, religious affiliation, and ancestry).

These variables comprise the Standard Set of Cultural and Language Indicators which will form the basis of ABS practice in collecting, storing and disseminating cultural and language information. The ABS is currently working on explanatory documentation that will provide the necessary information for understanding this new standard. The document should be available in late 1999.

Conclusion

During 2000, DIMA will consult with departments and agencies in refining the new reporting Framework. It will also work with relevant agencies to focus efforts on exploring the holistic approach to diversity as outlined above including the possible synergies between the *Charter* and other initiatives such as the Productive Diversity and Workplace Diversity Programs. The work by the ABS on the cultural and language indicators should also have implications for *Charter* implementation. In addition, the Access and Equity Annual Report 2000 will include a special reference on issues affecting the Australian South Sea Islander (ASSI) community in Australia.