

---

## 2.2 Highlights of relevant initiatives by other levels of government

The *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* represents a nationally consistent approach to delivering government services through its endorsement by all levels of government. The 1998 Access and Equity Annual Report included contributions from some States and Territories and the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) for the first time.

Contributions for this report were received from the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, and ALGA. Highlights of relevant initiatives are outlined below.

### Australian Capital Territory

- The ACT Government is working with Bilingual Community Educators to develop, implement and evaluate intervention strategies designed to address key health issues for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This work has included quarterly network meetings and training of Bilingual Community Educators in areas such as women's health.
  - The Bilingual Community Educators stated that they had gained skills and knowledge about women's health issues and how to access relevant services. Many had also gained the necessary confidence to run public information sessions; feedback from these sessions has also been positive.
- ACT WorkCover's industry specific information sessions have aimed to increase awareness of, and access to, information on best practice OHS, workers compensation, regulations for compliance and dangerous goods advice. The sessions have been complemented by the development of tailored information packages.
  - An example of targeted communication is the current Cleaning Industry Project that has identified a high percentage of cleaning industry employees as being from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Prevention awareness information provided in relation to this project is being developed in an appropriate graphic format to cater for the target audience.

### New South Wales

- The EAC of NSW has implemented a framework for a systematic evaluation of the Government's Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement Program. The Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement Standards Framework enables departments and agencies to self assess their performance against five graded activity areas. These are: planning and evaluation; program and service delivery; staffing; communication; and funded services.
  - Key agencies report to the Commission on the level they believe they have achieved and provide information about the processes, initiatives and activities, to justify the rating in each activity area.
  - The results of the agency self-assessments, moderated by Commission experience and input, are aggregated and published in the Commission's annual Ethnic Affairs Report to Parliament. The EAC's 1998 Ethnic Affairs Report indicated strong results in the 'Planning and Evaluation' and 'Communication' areas. However, improvement against the 'Funded Services' activity is required. The EAC anticipates that outcomes will improve incrementally in coming years as departments and agencies use the Framework to influence and improve their performance in ethnic affairs. The EAC also expects to receive community feedback on the performance of departments and agencies through the five Regional Advisory Committees and a major seminar initiated by the community.
- It is noted that the Commonwealth has adopted the NSW model and is developing its own framework for assessing implementation of the *Charter*.

### Queensland

- The Queensland Government launched the Multicultural Queensland Policy in August 1998, with the aim of fostering an inclusive, cohesive and open society and developing strategies that promote equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all Queenslanders. The policy has three core principles: access, participation and cohesion; and four key strategies: cultural diversity support, service delivery, consultation and the Register of Multicultural Advisers (an appointments database). As a guide to the design, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of services, Queensland departments and agencies use the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*.
- The Queensland Government also launched the Queensland Government Language Services Policy. The policy aims to ensure that eligible clients are informed of services and their entitlements through the development of appropriate communication strategies. These strategies include the engagement of professional interpreters in circumstances where clients have difficulties communicating in English.

- 
- Multicultural Affairs Queensland has the responsibility for coordinating policy development and planning under the Multicultural Queensland Policy across the Queensland Public Service sector. It convened statewide community consultations in 1999 to inform and promote the policy. Consultations have resulted in an increased awareness by departments and agencies of emerging issues for ethnic communities, collation of multicultural issues for a report to the Premier, and an increased community understanding of multiculturalism and current Multicultural Queensland Policy. Issues frequently raised have been accessible and equitable services, employment, health, education, and translating and interpreting services. ASSI issues have also been included for special attention.
    - In 1999 the Queensland Government announced its intention to formally recognise ASSI's unique contribution to Queensland society, and made a commitment to ensure that members of this group have equal opportunities to participate in the economic, social and cultural life of Queensland.
    - It is noted that the Year 2000 *Access and Equity Annual Report* will report specifically on ASSI issues.

### **South Australia**

- With support from the Commonwealth's *Living in Harmony* initiative, the Office of Multicultural and International Affairs (OMIA), in conjunction with the Office of the Ombudsman (SA), initiated its Multicultural Access to Justice Program (MAJP) in South Australia in 1999. The purpose of the MAJP is to provide simple and effective access to justice in administrative or other matters for people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds living in regional South Australia. Under MAJP, Justices of the Peace with backgrounds of cultural understanding, and other suitable community contact persons, are appointed to facilitate the referral of complaints from the target group to the appropriate complaints-handling authorities.
  - The program, launched in the Riverland, is being extended to other areas across regional South Australia. It is anticipated that it will be subsequently introduced in the Adelaide metropolitan area, and may be used as a model by other States and Territories.

## 2.2 Highlights of relevant initiatives by other levels of government

---

- During 1998-99, the inaugural Multicultural Youth Leadership Summit was convened by OMIA SA, specifically targeting senior secondary students. Summit discussions focussed on the areas of civic duty, productive diversity, cultural respect and social equity. Approximately 250 young people from over 30 secondary schools participated with four outstanding young Australians leading the debates. The Summit received support from the Commonwealth's *Living in Harmony* initiative.
  - Intended outcomes include: heightened youth self esteem, increased awareness of the multicultural fabric of Australia, heightened appreciation of the issues surrounding multiculturalism, the opportunity to meet and speak with young Australian role models, and publication of the Inaugural Multicultural Youth Summit document *Telling It How It Is: Our Story, Our Future*. Feedback from participating schools has been overwhelmingly positive, and includes requests for more such events. Consequently, the next summit is scheduled for later during 1999, and efforts are made to enable students from the State's country regions to attend.
- Following State Cabinet's endorsement of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society's* seven principles in May 1999, a series of strategic whole-of-government initiatives will be developed to assist departments and agencies in the implementation of the principles into their operations. One such initiative, a Multicultural Good Practice Network, will be an interdepartmental network of officers responsible for the planning, delivery and evaluation of services, so that agencies have opportunities to learn from one another and to promote their own examples of excellence in service provision for a diverse clientele.

### Victoria

- Action on Disability in Ethnic Communities has worked with 23 Disability Information Services to identify service barriers and increase access to services for people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The barriers identified include: insufficient information available in relevant community languages; a lack of promotion to culturally and linguistically diverse communities; a lack of networking with those communities; and inadequate relevant cross-cultural staff training. As a result of this project the 23 agencies are developing access and equity action plans. The project, which was funded by the Victorian Government, has also produced a *Directory of Disability Information Services* in 12 community languages.
- A VSDC - Services for Deaf Children project is assisting parents from language backgrounds other than English to communicate with their deaf children who speak Australian sign language (Auslan). VSDC have identified a problem in households where children used Auslan, but their parents did not speak English and were unable to communicate. As Auslan tutors were unable to teach parents

---

common words or phrases because they could not speak the parents' language, VSDC has received Victorian Government funding to develop five short videos in four community languages to teach parents common Auslan signs. The videos cover the themes of home, school, food and kitchen, stories, play, and outdoor and community activities.

- Victoria's LanguageLink, which provides access to vital information and interpreting services, has been extended to clients from diverse language backgrounds living in regional Victoria. LanguageLink is a multilingual telephone information service supplied by the Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service, which can be accessed for the cost of a local call in the areas of Morwell, Traralgon, Shepparton, Bendigo and Mildura. The service provides pre-recorded information on local council services, housing, employment and health care in English and eight community languages. Callers who need more information can be transferred directly to an information officer with an on-line interpreter.
  - Performance information on regional LanguageLink is not yet available, however, performance information from established metropolitan projects have shown LanguageLink to be successful, with substantial usage of the service. For example, 6,400 non-English speakers called the AEC's LanguageLink service for the 1998 Federal Election, and during 1998-99, 3,200 people called Moreland City Council's LanguageLink and 2,400 called Dandenong City Council's LanguageLink. Across LanguageLink projects, the pre-recorded information met the needs of 75 per cent of callers, with only 25 per cent of callers seeking further information from the service provider.

### **Initiatives by Australian Local Government Association**

- In 1999 ALGA launched its publication, *Services for All: Promoting Access and Equity in Local Government*, to assist councils to take proactive approaches to providing access to quality services and a 'fair go' for all residents. The publication, which refers to the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*, encourages councils to incorporate the principles of access and equity into corporate planning processes. An online version is available on ALGA's website [www.alga.com.au](http://www.alga.com.au).
- ALGA has also launched *Justice and Equity for All*, a best practice guide aimed at improving relations with Indigenous peoples. Funded by ATSIC, it outlines a range of models and practices for cooperation between local governments and their Indigenous constituents. The publication is available online at [www.alga.com.au](http://www.alga.com.au).

## 2.2 Highlights of relevant initiatives by other levels of government

---

- The Queensland Government's Local Area Multicultural Partnerships (LAMP) Program aims to promote multiculturalism at the local level. The program, managed by Multicultural Affairs Queensland, is a partnership between State and Local Governments and is part of the cultural diversity support strategy. In the first round of LAMP, six councils have been funded for three years to promote positive community relations and to develop and implement strategies for improving access to services for diverse groups within the community. These councils are Brisbane, Ipswich, Caboolture, Hervey Bay, Mackay and Cairns.
  - The Local Government Association of Queensland has also received funding to employ a Community Relations Coordinator, who will support the network of LAMP council workers and work at a strategic level to integrate multicultural perspectives into local government policy development. The second round of LAMP will expand the program to include another eight councils.
- To assist councils in local community planning, the Municipal Association of Victoria has worked on improving settlement planning data flow between local government and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs over the last 18 months. Councils are also increasingly including access and equity considerations in service specifications for competitive tendering of services.