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SECTION TWO

Reporting by
Departments
and Agencies



The Year in Review

Those portfolio agencies not involved in the trial of the framework for measuring performance against the *Charter* principles have contributed to this report by providing examples of the good practice initiatives implemented over the past 12 months. The following is a summary of portfolio agencies initiatives designed to enhance access and equity for clients, improve methods of communication with the public and add to the efficiency and effectiveness of government. In recent years, portfolio agencies have provided their contributions to reports against each of the *Charter* principles.

The reporting format used this year reflects the framework structure. This will assist portfolio agencies to appreciate how the seven principles apply to the five functions within their organisation. As the framework will be used for the 2001 report the following good practice examples are grouped under the five core roles.

It is noted that some good practice examples reported were in response to significant events such as the East Timor emergency, and the Olympic and Paralympic Games. These initiatives demonstrate the responsiveness of portfolio agencies to the environment and events, providing long-term benefits for all Australians.

Policy Adviser

The Commonwealth Government's December 1999 *A new agenda for a multicultural Australia* states that multiculturalism is for all Australians.

The *New Agenda* also points to addressing needs and maximising benefits, as the two key priorities for government programs which intersect with language and cultural diversity.

It will take time for policy advisers to routinely factor language and cultural diversity issues into their deliberations; currently this only occurs where the policy is directed primarily at migrant, refugee or Indigenous groups.

There are signs of portfolio agencies reflecting the *New Agenda's* new emphases. For instance, Austrade saw the potential of utilising Australia's language and cultural diversity to create business opportunities during the Olympic games. Austrade's activities included:

- briefing ethnic business chambers on Austrade's Olympics program;
- providing briefing on the role of Business Club Australia and the trade and investment opportunities presented for local or overseas members during the Olympics; and
- organising a number of business chambers to participate in market focussed events.

The Australia Council has undertaken a review of the goal and objectives for the Arts in a Multicultural Australia (AMA) policy. One new project is a conference and forum to be held in 2001 which will discuss where and how multiculturalism and its discourses will be positioned post the millennium. The goal of the

AMA policy is to value the diversity and capacity for innovation that exists in Australian multicultural society and encourage its creative expression across all art forms. The objectives include:

- encouraging the development and creation of multicultural work by artists of all backgrounds;
- supporting artists' choices about engagement with their cultural heritage; and
- enabling innovative companies to create and support new multicultural work.

Other portfolio agencies report issuing policy advice on a range of diversity related matters. For instance:

- The Department of Health and Aged Care funds the Carer Information and Support Program under which it has established a Culture and Access working group to consider access issues for carers from a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The working group will:
 - ensure that all information resources developed are accessible;
 - ensure resources are both culturally and linguistically inclusive; and
 - provide recommendations on the development of specialised resources.
- The Department of Transport and Regional Services has established the Jervis Bay Territory Justice Issues Group. The Group has designed a flexible approach to addressing the incidence of crime in a culturally sensitive manner. The program is designed to assist Indigenous people who have been taken into custody by providing appropriate support and ensuring that police interviews are conducted

according to prescribed procedures. The Group is now exploring a range of educational and preventative measures aimed at reducing the incidence of youth crime.

- The Sex Discrimination Unit within the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission has undertaken a study entitled *Oceans of Fires: Immigrant and Refugee Women in Australia* in order to inform the work of the Sex Discrimination and the Race Discrimination Commissioners. The Commission recognises that women can face multiple forms of discrimination and that this needs to be addressed in a way that acknowledges the totality of their experience. The Unit employed an intern specifically to look at gender issues faced by recent arrivals and more broadly by immigrant and refugee women.
- The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet ensures that the Australian honours system is representative and accessible to all Australians by making the *Guidelines for the Order of Australia* nomination form available in seven languages other than English, on the website and through the Government House telephone service.

The Australian Heritage Commission's guide, *Migrant Heritage Places in Australia: How to find your heritage places* aims to assist migrants to identify their heritage and nominate places to register for inclusion on the Register of the National Estate. A number of trials have been made of the guide to ensure that it is effective and easy for migrant groups to use. It includes a manual and Internet toolkit to assist the Chinese-Australian community identify its heritage and nominate places to heritage registers including the Register of the National Estate.

Regulator

Regulation agencies have major programs designed to address English language proficiency barriers as part of their normal processes.

One example of this during 1999–2000 involved the introduction of the goods and services tax (GST). The Treasury set up the GST Start-Up Assistance Office to assist small, medium and community enterprises to adjust their businesses to the GST environment. There were many publications provided in electronic form through the GST Start-Up website and through direct order via the GST Assist Helpline. A number of publications were produced in Braille and other languages.

Purchaser

Purchasing arrangements vary greatly, as does the importance of language and cultural diversity within these arrangements. For instance, language and cultural diversity are unlikely to be relevant to the purchasing of office supplies but may need to be considered in the letting of certain consultancy or research contracts. Where outsourced welfare or personnel services are being purchased under a competitive tendering arrangement it is very likely that language and cultural diversity will need to be carefully considered.

There are many examples of portfolio agencies commissioning work or providing financial assistance to another organisation to develop a program aimed at utilising Australia's language or cultural diversity. Such purchasing arrangements often have mixed aims of addressing needs and seeking to maximise the benefits of diversity. For instance:

- The Health Insurance Commission (HIC) has been assisting the Northern Territory's Indigenous population to achieve better

coverage on the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register. The HIC, in partnership with Territory Health Services, was able to achieve greatly increased registrations and childhood immunisation coverage rates. These measures have also improved the eligibility of the Northern Territory population to payments from Centrelink via the Maternity Immunisation Allowance and Child Care Benefit.

- The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs has developed an initiative to enhance educational outcomes for Indigenous students. In response, 83 Strategic Results Projects are in place as part of the Indigenous Education Strategic Results Initiatives Program. These projects:
 - identify what changes in delivery practices would result in improved learning outcomes;
 - focus on literacy and numeracy, vocational education and training in secondary schools;
 - support students in the transition from home to school and primary to secondary school; and
 - support students re-entering education and training.
- The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business manages the Small Business Enterprise Culture Program which is designed to increase the business management skills of small business managers. One such project is the Multicultural Business Support Services. It funds the Russian Ethnic Representative Council of Victoria to provide skills development training packages to small businesses owned and operated by members of Victoria's migrant community. The project incorporates a six-month mentoring

component and includes an interactive Internet approach. Over 70 businesses will be involved in the project and at least 50 percent of participants are women.

- The National Library of Australia administers a Community Heritage Grants program to assist community organisations such as multicultural, ethnic and Indigenous people's groups and historical societies to preserve significant documentary remnants of the nation's history. Examples include the Wing Hing Long Heritage Emporium and the Italian Historical Society.
- The Department of Health and Aged Care provided funding to the Multicultural HIV/AIDS Service to undertake a project for people from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds living with HIV/AIDS. One component of this project utilises the services of their co-workers. These staff understand a patient's cultural background and how this influences the way in which HIV affects their lives. These co-workers provide emotional and practical support to people living with HIV/AIDS and their families, including information presented in a culturally appropriate way.

The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has developed advice to prospective suppliers within programs to support arts and cultural activity at regional and community festivals. It has developed a series of 'contacts' booklets, detailing organisations in each State and Territory that prospective applicants may seek advice or assistance from in developing their applications. It is hoped that both Indigenous and overseas born applicants will utilise the 'contacts' booklets to contribute to the strength of their proposals.

Provider

There have been a number of innovative activities put in place as a response to the Olympic and Paralympic events by Austrade and the Australian Customs Service (ACS) with a dual purpose: to improve service to customers and to promote the economic opportunities for Australia. While the initiatives are a response to a big increase in overseas visitors, many will become part of the standard way of doing business for these organisations.

- *Staff training for passenger processing.* The training provided Customs staff with an understanding of access requirements for, and the specialised needs of, disabled travellers, in preparation for the large numbers of passengers with disabilities arriving in Australia for the Paralympics.
- *Coordination of a visitor information campaign for the 2000 Olympic Games.* A brochure entitled *A 'must read' for visitors to Australia* has been translated into 12 languages in hard copy and into 22 languages on the website.
- *Multilingual signage.* Early in 2000, multilingual signage was successfully introduced at Cairns and a number of other airports. Signage in Japanese, Chinese and several other languages has meant:
 - easier access for all passengers;
 - quicker processing of non English speaking passengers; and
 - benefits to the Customs operation at the airport.

The emergency in East Timor prompted the ACS to utilise the language skills of staff to improve the processing of evacuees and maintain good client relations in a time of crisis.

- There are a number of Customs staff in the Northern Territory with language skills, including Italian and Indonesian. These officers used their skills to interpret at meetings and explain customs and immigration procedures prior to the arrival of troops and evacuees. The ease of communication assisted Customs to efficiently process the evacuees, especially during the initial stages of the East Timor emergency when the situation was tense and a smooth operation was essential.

Major external events such as the Olympics or the crisis in East Timor can prompt a portfolio agency to adopt diversity management strategies that may not have been otherwise implemented.

This indicates that the *Charter* provides good guidance in times of need, and that its principles are to some extent instinctively understood.

It is hoped that such responses would lead to normal strategic planning.

A number of business related programs make conscious efforts to leverage Australia's language and cultural diversity. For instance:

- Austrade has a number of initiatives in place as part of the Ethnic Exporter Program and the Indigenous Exporter Program. These programs aim to facilitate access to Austrade's services and consequently to stimulate and add value to the export activities of Australian residents with ethnic links to other countries. They also aim to harness the special skills and market linkages of members of ethnic communities for the development of new export businesses and Indigenous Australians involved in business related to Indigenous culture.
- Austrade translated information brochures into Chinese and Vietnamese to meet the needs of Australian business people of Chinese and Vietnamese origin who are seeking to develop business in China and Vietnam. The brochures are used by Austrade's export advisers to answer more commonly asked questions.
- Austrade provided sponsorship for the Exporter Category in the Multicultural Marketing Awards arranged by the NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission.
- The Department of Industry, Science and Resources — AusIndustry's Invest Australia is responsible for promoting Australia as an investment location. As such, it must be sensitive to, and work with, a range of cultures and national systems. 'Invest Australia' promotes Australia's cultural diversity to the rest of the investment world, through promotional material and on a one-to-one level through overseas offices. Maintaining good access to 'Invest Australia' information for both international and local clients is a key objective. The main promotional document is translated into seven languages and distributed to the relevant centres.

Examples of service provider initiatives with **access** as their primary aim:

- ScreenSound Australia has recently implemented new programs to extend access to the national audiovisual collection to remote areas. As part of this program, ScreenSound asked the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association to assess its audiovisual collection and provide advice on the preservation of audiovisual material.

- The National Archives of Australia has established an Indigenous Reference Group to advise on and support the implementation of the Archives' Indigenous Policy. The Group is made up of organisations such as:
 - the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies;
 - the Koorie Heritage Trust; and
 - the National Indigenous Media Association of Australia.
- The Department of Veterans' Affairs has sought to address the needs of the rural veteran community through the *1996 Health Policy for the Veteran Community in Rural and Remote Areas*. Since the policy has been implemented, the department has recognised that information about its services and benefits may not be reaching the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veteran community and that some Indigenous veterans and their families may not be accessing their full entitlements. As a result, a strategy is in place to raise awareness of benefits and entitlements available through the department. The strategy launch coincided with the inaugural meeting of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans and Service Association of Australia, formed to identify Indigenous veterans and to assist them and their dependants to access benefits through the department.
- To alleviate the language barriers faced by Aboriginal persons, the Attorney General's Department has established an Aboriginal Interpreter Service in the Northern Territory. The service includes a training component and is jointly funded by the Northern Territory Government. The Commonwealth is also providing funding for additional interpreter training and to the Aboriginal Legal Services directly to enable them to purchase interpreter services in 2000–2001.
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics has jointly facilitated an Internet resource, WISE (Website Indigenous Statistics Education) allowing students to easily access statistics on Indigenous people.
- The Department of Health and Aged Care, the National Office for the Information Economy and MultilingualWeb.com.au have created the Multicultural Australia Website. The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia is supporting this project by providing basic Internet training on the use of this site throughout Australia for older people whose first language is not English. There are 16 languages on the site and a wide range of links to non English online resources is provided for each language. The links connect to news, community information, government information, education and health, money, leisure and culture, and senior interests. The website also features multilingual email, message boards and chat rooms.

Examples of service provider initiatives with **communication** as their primary aim:

- The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has set up *Message Stick*. It is an Indigenous online service which includes features such as *Black Telegraph*, *Black Arts and Culture* and *Radar* and provides:
 - an identifiable Indigenous website for Indigenous and non Indigenous people to learn about the services of the ABC; and
 - information, news, personal stories and an interactive forum.
- Treasury's mission is to improve the wellbeing of the Australian people, taking into account not only material wealth but also social, cultural and environmental values. The Department has a number of important initiatives. One is *The Little Black Book of Scams* designed to educate consumers about

the many frauds, scams, rorts and rip-offs used by swindlers to gain trust and acceptance and the ways that consumers can protect themselves. The book was published on the National Consumer website in four additional languages.

- In December 1999 the complaints handling section within the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission established an access working group. The objective of the working group is to improve the accessibility of the complaint handling service by, for example, those who are not proficient in English. The tasks of the working group include:
 - identifying issues relating to the accessibility of the service, and
 - developing strategies to address these issues.
- The Health Insurance Commission identified that a high percentage of Medicare claims were rejected due to incorrect enrolment in Medicare. A simplified enrolment procedure has resulted in fewer errors in enrolment for those who are not proficient in English.
- The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) within Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry — Australia, has implemented a number of initiatives aimed at better understanding the particular needs of international visitors. AQIS appreciates that many international travellers, students and Australian citizens with family overseas are unaware of the strict quarantine requirements for entering Australia. Some recent initiatives that AQIS has implemented include:
 - publishing a brochure *What Can't I Take Into Australia?* in English and ten additional languages;
 - maintaining a database of multilingual Quarantine officers who can explain

quarantine laws in media interviews and can reply to written enquires in languages other than English;

- employing multilingual Quarantine officers at Australia's international airports to help explain why we have to confiscate food items. Many officers have also completed training in cultural awareness to help assure travellers that AQIS understands their sense of loss when goods have to be seized; and
 - working with international students to reduce the risk of introducing pests and diseases through the international mail system.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and AusAid continue to expand translations of their publications. *Australia in Brief* is now available on the DFAT website in seven languages as well as English.
 - The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) administered a Federal Referendum in November 1999. The AEC's public information campaign included a number of strategies to ensure all voters had access to information about the referendum. The strategies were aimed at minimising the language, cultural, physical or distance barriers to help electors fully participate. They included:
 - a television clip explaining the voting process which was screened in several languages in 18 selected polling places on polling day. The selected places had a high population of electors born overseas and a history of high informal vote rates;
 - advertisements, translated into 25 languages, placed in the ethnic media;
 - utilising the telephone interpreting service in 15 languages; and
 - an elector leaflet translated into 14 languages available on the AEC website.

- The Office of the Employment Advocate established the National Telephone Advisory Service as a discrete service in January 2000. This service now has dedicated trained staff to respond to requests from customers.
- The National Gallery of Australia (NGA) has developed a Travelling Exhibition Program entitled *Keeping Culture: Aboriginal Art to Keeping Places and Cultural Centres* which links an integrated Aboriginal Curatorial Mentorship Program with a travelling exhibition. The NGA has worked closely with nominated art workers amongst the Ngarrindjeri people of the Coorong/Murray River region in South Australia, the Aboriginal people of Tasmania and the Yuin/Monaro people of south coast New South Wales. The Aboriginal Curators have been actively involved in the development of the exhibition and will contribute to education, promotion and training both at the NGA and in each community.
- The Aged Care payments system has been introduced in the Department of Health and Aged Care to collect data on the level of service provision for older migrants and Indigenous people.

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) supports the equitable participation of migrants by providing accessible, quality, national interpreting and translating services, between English and migrant languages, to individuals and to government and non government service deliverers.

By performing this service, TIS plays a key role in delivering the productive diversity potential of Australia's multi lingual capability.

TIS operates 24 hours and 7 days a week and can be contacted on telephone number 131450, from anywhere in Australia, for the cost of a local telephone call.

Examples of service provider initiatives with **shared aims** of access and communication:

- The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) Radio broadcasts in 68 languages and is a powerful tool in meeting the settlement, information and communication needs of Australians of non English speaking backgrounds. There are limitations to SBS services, for example, it is not available (except by satellite) in most of regional and remote Australia. These limitations have been partially overcome by Radio audio-on-demand on the SBS website, initially with the *World View* current affairs program in English. SBS has commenced the rapid rollout of audio-on-demand services and currently has programs available online in 48 languages other than English.
 - The result of this initiative will be that many people who were unable to access Australian radio services in their preferred language will be able to listen to SBS Radio's language programs at the time of their choice via the Internet. Material is supplemented by text introductions and is available in high quality Internet audio.
- Knowledge of the existence of the Ombudsman's office and its role is an essential prerequisite for people to be able to access these services. A multicultural affairs consultant was engaged to improve access for people who are not proficient in English. As a result new brochures have been developed outlining the role of the

Ombudsman in 24 languages. These brochures have:

- been distributed to ethnic organisations;
- resulted in direct contact with a range of ethnic and Indigenous organisations throughout Australia; and
- prompted offices in each capital city to conduct outreach activities for ethnic communities.

Employer

There are two key approaches to understanding how well a portfolio agency utilises its role as an employer in its diversity management strategies: a corporate governance approach (which looks at corporate planning and management documents and processes); and a personnel practices approach (which looks at individual practices throughout the organisation).

Although many powers are devolved to agency heads, central agencies retain important statutory powers and the role of providing advice to government and portfolio agencies. For instance:

- the Public Service and Merit Protection Commission has a key role in the development of agency workplace diversity programs and provides advice on staffing issues. The Commission also has responsibility for the whole-of-government *State of the Service* workplace diversity report;
- the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet provides guidance as to what portfolio agencies should include in their annual reports;
- the Treasury and the Department of Finance and Administration (DOFA) have crucial roles in setting funding parameters. DOFA also has responsibility for a whole-of-government report on client service charters;

- the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs has responsibility for a whole-of-government report on the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*.

All portfolio agencies reflect such requirements and advice in their corporate practices. There are many good practice examples, for example:

- In response to the Olympics and to improve future service, those Customs staff with language skills were:
 - identified and encouraged to undertake appropriate accreditation;
 - paid a Community Language Allowance in recognition of the use of language skills for their work; and
 - provided with special badges identifying their language skills.
- The Australian Federal Police implemented a number of training initiatives to ensure staff understand the community that they serve and assist them to provide fair treatment under the law for all clients. Examples include:
 - the National Police Ethnic Advisory Bureau received a *Living in Harmony* grant for the development of an in-service training project for dealing with racist violence;
 - the Malunggang Unit coordinates and implements the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career Development and Recruitment Strategy which aims to attract, recruit and retain Indigenous people;
 - the Brisbane office conducted a two day Chinese cross cultural awareness program providing employees with an understanding of the differences between Asian, specifically Chinese, and Australian cultures; and

— officers from ACT Community Operations wear special badges identifying their language skills.

- Recognising the value of a diverse workforce, Customs staff in Cairns have implemented a Torres Strait Islander marine traineeship program. Security clearance processes have been streamlined to reduce delays that have previously held up the appointment of trainees. There are already benefits, such as, enhanced operational effectiveness due to greater understanding of regional cultural issues.
- The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business has in place an Indigenous Australian Recruitment and Career Development Strategy. One of the main aims of the strategy is to increase the number of Indigenous staff in the department by 33 percent. In the first year of the strategy, numbers of Indigenous Australian staff increased from 52 to 80, an increase of over 50 percent. This was achieved by recruitment of cadets through the 2000 National Indigenous Cadetship Program and Indigenous Graduates as part of the 2000 Graduate intake.
- The Australian Broadcasting Corporation has received funding from the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business for a project aimed at improving the employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Through the project the ABC provides accredited training and permanent employment for 15 Indigenous trainees or cadets.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission has initiated a Recruitment and Career Development Strategy to operate in conjunction with its Recruitment Policy and Guidelines. The aim of this strategy is to increase the number of Indigenous employees

within the Commission, the levels they are employed at, and their skills. As a result, the Indigenous staffing level is now at 44 percent — the highest level to date and skills development opportunities for all staff have increased.

Highlights of initiatives by other levels of Government

The *Charter* incorporates a nationally consistent approach to delivering government services across all levels of government. In previous years annual access and equity reporting contributions have been received from States, Territories and the Australian Local Government Association.

Contributions for the 2000 Report were received from the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia.

Australian Capital Territory

During 1999, the ACT Office of Multicultural Affairs implemented a cross portfolio communication strategy that contained initiatives to enhance communication between ACT public service agencies and Canberra's overseas born community. The strategy includes:

- increased use of bi/multilingual community-generated newsletters to disseminate government information;
- the weekly provision of program material containing information about ACT Government services and programs to 60 regional, multicultural and community radio stations; and
- the 1999 launch of the multicultural e-directory. The e-directory contains web pages for Canberra's migrant and refugee communities (www.act.gov.au/multicultural). The website allows participating communities to update their own data and post information

to promote community programs and activities.

New South Wales

In 1999–2000 the Ethnic Affairs Council (EAC) of New South Wales (NSW) continued to work with over 200 State organisations as part of the ongoing development and evaluation of the Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS). The EAPS aims to ensure that the needs and aspirations of ethnic communities are integrated into portfolio agencies' work.

- As part of the 1999 Ethnic Affairs Report the EAC undertook a detailed assessment of 22 key agencies using the EAPS Standards Framework.

A comparison of 1998 and 1999 results in the 1999 Report highlighted improvements in the areas of planning and evaluation, program and service delivery, staffing, and funded services. Examples of individual initiatives include:

- The NSW Multicultural Advisory Committee continued to provide advice on issues important to the success of the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games. For example, the Committee had input into Games catering and the development of cultural awareness training packages for all full-time, volunteer and contract staff of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games.
- The Ageing and Disability Department, which administers the Seniors Card Scheme, has actively sought to promote the Scheme's services to migrants and to ethno-specific business. For example, in the past year the Scheme's handbooks have been translated into 12 additional languages.
- In 1999 the Department of Community Services launched a Client Feedback and Assistance Service. In the past year brochures promoting the Service have been translated

into 10 additional languages. Clients are also able to provide customer service feedback in their own language, via the Translating and Interpreting Service.

Queensland

The Report to the Premier on the Implementation of the Multicultural Queensland Policy 1999–2000 highlights the range of initiatives currently undertaken by Queensland government portfolio agencies.

Some good practice examples exemplifying incorporation of the *Charter's* principles into service delivery strategies include:

- The Queensland Health Multicultural Policy Statement was developed in response to Queensland Health's commitment to the government's multicultural policy. The Statement embeds *Charter* principles into core Queensland Health processes. Some service principles identified in the Statement include:
 - Public Health Service Area Outcome Plans and Health Service District Strategic Plans are to incorporate local multicultural health strategies; and
 - agreements with funded non government health related service providers are, where appropriate, required to incorporate a multicultural approach to service provision.
- The Multilingual Information Services Pilot Project was initiated by the Department of Housing in response to identified community need. As part of the pilot project, departmental information materials have been translated into Samoan, Spanish and Vietnamese languages. Topics translated include: an overview of products available from the Department of Housing; bond loans; bond loan eligibility; public housing eligibility;

and wait times and wait areas for public housing.

- The Multicultural Affairs Queensland, Office of the Public Service Commissioner and the Southbank Institute of TAFE initiated a pilot program that enables migrants to gain work experience skills in the Queensland Public Service. The program identifies and trains participants in areas often identified as potential employment barriers for migrants. Areas of training include how to apply for jobs, how to access training and how to compete with people who have local experience.

South Australia

Following State Cabinet's 1999 endorsement of the principles of the *Charter*, a range of strategies has been developed. These include:

- The Department of the Premier and Cabinet officially launched the Multicultural Good Practice Network in December 1999. The Network is an innovative, whole-of-government initiative, with the primary goal of achieving good service outcomes for the State's migrant and refugee population. The Office of Multicultural and International Affairs (OMIA) facilitates the Network. The Network includes some 80 public sector staff responsible for the planning, delivery and evaluation of services in hospitals, schools and courts of law. Presentations have focussed on issues relating to the provision of services to migrant and refugee clientele, and deal with cross-portfolio service matters such as the use of information technology throughout regional South Australia.
- Following the success of the 1998 Multicultural Youth Leadership Summit, OMIA

facilitated two youth summits in 1999–2000. The aim is to provide opportunities for young South Australians of all backgrounds to celebrate their cultural and linguistic heritages, explore their role in our multicultural society and develop leadership skills. As part of the Summit participants are encouraged to develop strategies which can be put into practice within their schools, communities and families. The 1999–2000 Summit was supported by the Commonwealth Government's *Living in Harmony* initiative.

- Multicultural Access to Justice Program (MAJP) is a joint initiative of the South Australian Office of the State Ombudsman and OMIA. In 2000 the MAJP was extended from the Riverland to Port Lincoln and metropolitan Adelaide areas. The MAJP involves the appointment, training and support of contact officers throughout the South Australian community. MAJP contact officers have the cultural and linguistic skills needed to ensure that migrants and refugees gain equitable access to the State's Justice Services.
- The Volunteer Migrant Information Officer Network is an established link between South Australia's migrant communities and government agencies. The Network is a significant part of the state's ongoing communication strategy to encourage information dissemination regarding government policies, programs and services. In 1999–2000 particular focus was given to the promotion of the State's Home and Community Care Grant Scheme for Volunteers. Under the Scheme volunteers are reimbursed for expenses incurred while assisting the frail aged.

Recognition of Australian South Sea Islanders

The Australian South Sea Islander (ASSI) community is made up of the descendants of labourers brought to Australia, usually forcibly, to serve as a source of cheap labour. Brought to Queensland between 1863 and 1904, from some eighty Pacific Islands, the community is predominantly made up of people of Melanesian descent, in particular from Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. According to a census undertaken by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) in 1992, the community consists of at least 10,000 and possibly up to 12,000 people, 85 percent whom live in Queensland.

In September 2000 the Queensland Government formally recognised the ASSI community as a 'distinct cultural group' with the tabling of a formal *Queensland Government Recognition Statement*¹⁰ in State Parliament. While the recognition statement is symbolic on many levels, the Queensland Government has also committed to developing policies, programs and

services in order to deliver tangible outcomes to address the longstanding needs of the community.

Queensland's strategies include a whole-of-government action plan which will address issues such as the lack of knowledge and understanding within State Government agencies and the wider community; of the history, identity, art and culture of the ASSI. Specific strategies by individual agencies will also focus on areas of particular disadvantage; such as access to housing, training, employment and education.

Complementary to the Queensland Government's initiatives the National Library of Australia granted Mackay City Council, Queensland, funds to assist the local ASSI community to research and compile historical records regarding their community and its history in the region.

¹⁰ *Queensland Government Recognition Statement: Australian South Sea Islander Community*, 7 September 2000

