

RELIGION AND THE LAW

The Anti-Discrimination Board is conducting research on religion and discrimination in Australia - an area that is not covered under Anti Discrimination Legislation. The Board is considering the advisability of changing the legislation to provide legal protection for people who are discriminated against on grounds of religion.

The Board is particularly interested in receiving information and case histories from people in the ethnic communities who have experienced discrimination in jobs, housing, or other areas.

Dr. Juliet Sheen, Research Officer, Anti-Discrimination Board, points out that discrimination is particularly apparent in the area of employment.

"A person, for example, who goes for a typist's job may be asked his/her religious beliefs. And the job may be denied on those grounds."

The Ethnic Affairs Commission will provide interpreters for people who do not speak English and wish to present their cases.

For information contact: Dr. Juliet Sheen, Anti-Discrimination Board, 231 1655.

NEED FOR MORE EDUCATION ON FAMILY LAW FOR IMMIGRANTS

A working party was set up by the Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Family Court of Australia to look into ways in which the main provisions of the Family Law Act 1975 can be more easily understood by the community.

There have been radical changes to the Act, but the wider ramifications are not easily understood by the community. This is particularly so in the case of Australians of non-English speaking background.

The working party will get together Grant-in-Aid workers serving the community, and study the information package of the Family Court and ways in which it can be adapted.

It will also seek public reaction through the ethnic media on the Act, and general understanding of it.

This was one of the outcomes of the first seminar on family law and immigrants held in July by the Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Family Court of Australia.

The seminar brought together over 100 people - mostly health and welfare workers serving ethnic communities as well as interpreters and Family Court personnel. It revealed that there was an urgent need for public information and education for ethnic communities.

Some of the areas identified included the need for:

- Comprehensive information on the Family Law Act, 1975, in different languages so that its main provisions could be understood.
- The training and education of Judges, Court Counsellors, Legal Practitioners, Registrars and other Personnel on the specific needs of ethnic communities.
- Compulsory studies in multiculturalism in law courses.
- Effective liaison between ethnic agencies and Family Court personnel.
- Prior information to potential emigrants about Australian civic systems and family law.
- Educational packages for dissemination to the general public about specific problems for migrants during family breakdowns.

The Chief Judge of the Family Court of Australia, Justice Elizabeth Evatt, said Court personnel lacked detailed knowledge of the social and family customs of ethnic communities. She added that there was also a lack of understanding of the Australian legal and social systems by immigrants.

The Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission, Dr. Paolo Totaro, said that the Commission would help to promote more effective liaison between the Court's services and those offered by other groups working in the area.

For further information, please contact the Family Law Court Counselling Unit on 237 7111 or Dione McDonald on 231 7286.

CAREER TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Statistics compiled on the career patterns of public servants of ethnic backgrounds clearly indicate that they are often at a disadvantage when seeking effective career advancement.

Problems with communication, the projection of skills during job interviews, or even just filling out official forms has meant that they often find it difficult to obtain promotion.

Three Career Development Workshops have been planned for the current year by the Public Service Board, and these will form an important aspect of the government's Equal Employment Opportunity program. The Workshops will be conducted in October, November and December. They are similar to those which have been offered for some time to women.

The Workshops aim to provide information and counselling in a number of areas. These include State legislation and the career rights of all public servants; how to present skills and experience during a job interview; information on language courses; and the kind of skills required by various types of jobs.

Two pilot projects have already been conducted by the Public Service Board in consultation with the Ethnic Affairs Commission and other interested bodies. When notices are sent out to various departments, persons who are interested in the workshops should apply to their Personnel Officers for details.

For information, contact Pauline Heinonen on 230 3376.

POVERTY FIGURES IN AUSTRALIA

In response to a three-part series on poverty in Australia (published last month in the Sydney Morning Herald), the Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission, Dr. Paolo Totaro, made some observations.

He observed that amongst the figures detailing the numbers of "Those Most in Need", the entry in the first of the articles read "Refugees, Immigrants ... 50,000". The meaning of the figures in this table should be clarified in an otherwise excellent reportage.

The Commission has reason to believe that the figure was in "order of magnitude" or "educated guess" data produced by departments so that the Federal Government could calculate the numbers of people likely to be eligible for health cards from 1st September.

His letter to the Sydney Morning Herald noted that: "In this context, the 'Refugees, Immigrants' figure makes sense as the Government has stated that all new settlers will be eligible for free health care during their first six months. Given the total immigration quota of 120,000 for next year, it is reasonable to expect about 50,000 new arrivals will be card holders at any time after 1st September".

The Chairman said that many of the other Australians of 'Immigrant or Refugee' origin must be included in the other categories used to describe the poor. The total number of overseas-born Australians is about 2.9 million. Those among them who are poor certainly exceed 50,000 as research has proved.

*For information please contact Tony Dolk, Ethnic Affairs Commission,
231 7289.*

"THIRTY YEARS AFTER"

The experiences of Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds who came here thirty years ago are currently being recorded by a history scholar from Sydney University, Janis Wilton.

Ms. Wilton, 29, received a \$5,000 grant from the Ethnic Affairs Commission earlier this year to document some of the history of Australians of ethnic backgrounds.

The project, entitled "Thirty Years After" is being conducted in co-operation with the Mitchell Library. It will keep a record of the transcripts and recordings of interviews and documents donated.

Already Ms. Wilton has procured a wealth of material based on interviews with Australians of immigrant origin.

"It is essentially to record the experiences of migrants which would otherwise have been lost," she said.

Some of the material is on exhibition during Carnivale Week at the Ethnic Affairs Commission.

For information contact: Janis Wilton, History Department, University of Sydney, 692 3547 or Dione McDonald, Ethnic Affairs Commission on 231 7286.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT PHONE-IN

Sexual harassment at the workplace is a problem that confronts many women. And women with a limited grasp of English are often at the receiving end of the worst kind of harassment, simply because they don't know whom to discuss it with, or what resources are available to help.

The Ethnic Communities' Council has organised a week-long phone-in starting on 18th October in 10 languages, for women suffering sexual harassment within the ethnic communities. The Ethnic Affairs Commission will be on call to help through its interpreters.

The basic idea is to get women to ring in and discuss the problem in their own languages. The phone-in will also provide an opportunity to collate information in this sensitive area.

For more information please contact: Ilona Lee, Ethnic Communities' Council, 267 7255, or Dione McDonald, Ethnic Affairs Commission, 231 7286.

MEANWHILE

The N.S.W. Women's Advisory Council has recently produced a pamphlet on the subject. It defines the problems, suggests reasons for the occurrence of such situations, and gives an idea of legal rights and what action to take. Free pamphlets are available from the Advisory Council.

*Call 27 9541 during office hours or call into their offices:
8th Floor, 151 Macquarie Street, Sydney.*

UNIFAM ETHNIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Under a \$3,000 grant provided by the Premier through the Ethnic Affairs Commission, Unifam, the Sydney-based Marriage and Family Counselling Service, now has a part-time Information Officer to help Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese-speaking groups in Petersham.

The Ethnic Information and Family Counselling Unit set up by Unifam was in response to the urgent need in the area of marriage counselling of ethnic groups.

Sylvia Herrea, 38, the Information Officer, is an experienced social worker, and hopes to provide counselling and interpreters in other languages for people requiring the services.

Petersham has a high concentration of various ethnic groups. Many families require counselling in their own languages on matters involving marital communication, housing problems, and coping with elderly family members.

Ms. Herrea aims to pool in her resources towards family counselling, interpreting and the delivery of essential information to groups in need. She will be available three days a week.

*For appointments and information contact her on: 569 8600.
Address: Petersham Town Hall, 1st Floor, Crystal Street, Petersham, Sydney.*

PLAYGROUND FOR THE HANDICAPPED

An ambitious \$200,000 project has been initiated by a Sydney organisation to build a special adventure playground for handicapped school age children.

The organisation, Soroptimist International of Parramatta, is in the process of acquiring land behind the Andrew Campbell Reserve at Prospect Reservoir for the playground. Called "Pecky's Playground", it will have special facilities which will enable handicapped children to play in a natural setting.

Considering that 10 per cent of the total population is in some way handicapped - 3 per cent mentally and 7 per cent physically - the playground will provide a vital avenue for children in urgent need of such facilities.

The organisation has acquired some funds for the project, but is in need of more donations. It would also be interested in any advice or other skills you might offer, particularly from within the ethnic communities. This appeal takes on a special dimension in this International Year of Disabled Persons.

*For more information please write to: "Pecky's Playground",
P.O. Box 90, Rydalmere, 2116.*

BUILDING CONTRACT JARGON TRANSLATED

A set of explanatory notes in four languages has now been published to spell out the rights of home owners and builders using the standard 'BC3' contract.

The Master Builders Association, which had already translated business contract jargon into everyday English, has now published versions in Italian, Arabic, Serbian, Croatian and Greek. The explanatory notes which accompany the 'BC3' contract will be useful to people of Italian, Yugoslav, Greek and Lebanese origin living in N.S.W.

The Executive Director of the Master Builders Association, Mr. Ray Rocher, points out that the simple language translation and commonsense approach adopted by the notes will be of value to anyone planning to build a house. The four languages included in the translation are the most widely spoken in the State.

It explains the important issue of what a home owner should expect from a builder and vice versa, as well as the costs involved, and what can be done in cases of breach of contract by either party.

For information contact: the Legal and Contracts Dept., Master Builders Association, 519 3622 or 660 7188 (after October 2nd.).

FREE LEGAL ADVICE

Residents in the Manly area will get additional legal facilities through the recent opening of a Public Solicitor's Office under the the N.S.W. Legal Services Commission.

Services include free legal advice, and representation and mediation in cases of car accidents or tenants' problems. A means test will determine if one qualifies for the services. Opening hours are 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., Mondays to Fridays.

The phone number is 977 1629, 32-40 Central Avenue, Manly. There are also around 15 other Public Solicitor's Offices throughout the State. To find the nearest one please phone 238 7777.

EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

A major problem brought to the attention of social workers concerns emergency accommodation, particularly for single parents, homeless teenagers or women with marital problems.

The N.S.W. Housing Commission has recently set up a special Emergency Accommodation Unit, and is currently compiling a list of surplus Government-owned houses which can be used for people in need. It will cater not only for community groups, but also people on the housing waiting list who need temporary accommodation.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission, which is particularly aware of the needs of ethnic communities in this area, will be happy to provide liaison and translation services.

For more information, however, on the emergency accommodation contact: 266 0281 - Lorraine Yudaessi, on extension 233 or Julie Cameron on extension 233.

NEW WOMEN'S ARTS FESTIVAL DIRECTOR

A new State Government initiative called "Women and the Arts" now has a new Director, Ms. Jo Caust.

The project will operate under the co-sponsorship of the Division of Cultural Activities, of the Premier's Department, and the Women's Advisory Council. It will culminate in a festival of women's art in late 1982.

Ms. Caust's background covers 10 years in the arts field - as an actor, teacher, director and administrator.

She is currently in the Cultural Activities Division and can be contacted on: 27 7235.

MULTICULTURAL RESOURCE CENTRE

A new Multicultural Resource Centre which will cover the Botany area is to be opened soon.

It will be housed in the Eastlakes Shopping Centre, and will provide a variety of services including information, English classes, multilingual counselling, and facilities for meetings between ethnic groups.

The co-ordinator, John Sae, is interested in any ideas or suggestions readers of Ethnos may offer regarding this service. Contact him on 667 2811.

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE: SCALING OF MARKS

The Ethnic Affairs Commission's Project Officer (Education), Leslie Lynch, has prepared a discussion paper on the controversial and very current topic of the Higher School Certificate and the scaling of marks.

The Commission is aware that students in some community languages have been disadvantaged by the existing procedures in the scaling of marks.

The paper says that the problem can be largely overcome by the fuller implementation of a procedure known as the 'comparison method'. This involves comparing performances in community languages with performances in French and German.

The paper provides information essential to understand this difficult issue.

If interested in receiving a copy, contact: Leslie Lynch, on 231 7282.

ETHNIC COMMUNITIES' COUNCIL ANNUAL ELECTION

The annual election of the Ethnic Communities' Council was held last month. Those elected are:

Chairman: Mr. J. Samios
Senior Vice Chairman: Mr. G. Wojak
Vice Chairmen: I. Khuman G. Pappas
G. Harbaum A. Fazzini
G. Dechnicz G. Schliapnikoff
F. Milne A. Luciano
G. Aerts V. Koutsonadis
A. Szorkowsky I. Birzulis
Secretary: Nadia Lozzi-Cuthbertson

The Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission, Dr. Paolo Totaro, has invited the new executive for a working session with the Commission, aiming at more co-ordinated planning of future initiatives.