

# ethnmos

*Anniversary Special*

NO. 70

December, 1989

WE ARE TEN



*Celebrating a decade of change*

The Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW

ETHNIC AFFAIRS  
COMMISSION  
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## A team for the nineties



Violetta Walsh



Uri Themal ( Dep. Chairman)



John Dal broi



Ross Tzannes



George Miltenyi



Phillip Cuong Nguyen-Hoang

On the first of December 1979 the then government formally established the Ethnic Affairs Commission by an Act of Parliament with the appointment of the first eleven commissioners.

At the beginning of the Commission's second decade fourteen completely different faces make up the Commission (along with Chairman) to shape the policies for the Nineties.



Duncan MacLeod



Dushan Ristevski



Michael Cantali



Pauline Chan



Fahmi Hussain



Vesna Lovokovic



Joseph Barakat



John Gebhardt

## MEDIA CONFERENCE - TENTH ANNIVERSARY

*The serious part of the tenth anniversary celebration was a well attended media conference given by the Chairman to review the past decade and to peer into the next.*

In his opening remarks Mr. Kerkyasharian described in brief the achievements of the commission during its ten years of service to the people of New South Wales.

"The establishment of the Commission itself and its very existence over a decade has been important in letting people know that ethnic affairs has priority in this state. Its very existence has been a catalyst for many of the achievements which have occurred in the area of multiculturalism.

Perhaps the most significant and long lasting of the Commission's achievements is the Ethnic Affairs Policy Statements (EAPS) Programme. It has taken a number of years to get every one of the state government departments and statutory authorities to submit their detailed management plan on how to address the needs of people of non-English-speaking background. Now as we celebrate ten years of the Ethnic Affairs Commission's work all eighty-three government organisations have finally submitted their EAPS policy, allowing us to fulfill our function of monitoring the implementation of those plans. They must all report to us each year and then we must accept, amend or, in some cases, reject their level of progress in meeting the needs of this community.

Another major development has been the outlawing of racial vilification. The Commission played a key role in the development of those amendments which were passed by parliament this year."

ETHNOS, DECEMBER



Mr Kerkyasharian

*"I would like to see a depoliticisation of ethnic affairs. I want to see senior bureaucrats like departmental heads making decisions about service to people of non-English-speaking background not because they believe it is politically expedient but because they know that that is what a responsible senior bureaucrat should do."*

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"Multiculturalism is about attitudinal change. It is about social change. It is breaking new ground and therefore there will be lot of people who will say 'well you haven't done things fast enough' or 'some things you haven't done as they should have been done'. It is a question of moving forward but moving forward in a way which doesn't create backlashes which cannot be overcome. I think, given all those elements, in New South Wales, particularly, our achievements have been quite outstanding and they've been progressive and trendsetting within the nation. When it was established the E.A.C. was the first of its kind in Australia. The racial vilification bill was the first of its kind in Australia. Even the Ethnic Communities Council and FECCA were generated from New South Wales.

We have set a very steady, desirable and acceptable pace in New South Wales in multiculturalism.

I must here acknowledge the work of my predecessor - Dott. Paolo Totaro. He was the first chairman - the foundation chairman - of this Commission and he played a key role in many of the achievements."

**What follows is a summary of the key points made by the Chairman in response to journalists' questions.**

A lot of the work involved in countering racism and in the promotion of multiculturalism is educational and one of the areas we are currently tackling is the education area.

We have already had initial meetings with senior

representatives of the Department of Education. We are pursuing that so that we can get into our education system proper courses which promote an understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity. In some case it would be unproductive to try to change the attitude of people in their fifties, sixties or seventies. I think it is very important to address the question at the primary school level where children get together quite naturally and get on together very well. What we are seeking is to stop the colouring of their attitudes through the education system.

There are some things which you cannot stop overnight. There will probably always be people who will go out and paint slogans on walls. One has to address the fundamental issue which is attitudinal change. There are people, fortunately they are very few, in our society who behave in that way. We haven't had the degree of conflict that others have had overseas - in Europe, for example.

It is a matter of stopping it where it is and then pushing it back from there. The starting point must be the education system - the children".

**SBS**

"I was concerned at some newspaper reports recently about SBSTV's programme policies. Now, I don't know too what extent those reports were accurate. However, it is important for members of the ethnic communities to be able to look at SBSTV as a catalyst for social change, as a catalyst for the development of a multicultural cohesive society. It is very important for SBS to take that leading role and to be seen to take it.

In terms of radio I would like to see increased and tangible support for community ethnic radio as it is operated by SBS and for Ethnic Public Radio - the two are essential tools of communication. They're essential cornerstones of multiculturalism. They can co-exist.

They can cooperate and they need all the support they can get. Radio, particularly ethnic radio (being multilingual) is sometimes easy to put on the back page of your agenda papers because there are other more visible things. But ethnic radio reaches a large number of people. It is in fact a lifeline for a lot of people and it requires all the support it can get. The strongest support it has, unfortunately, is from people who are linguistically isolated. They're not people who can easily write letters to parliamentarians or to executives. Therefore it needs support from the broad based community including those who don't or cannot use it.

It needs visible and tangible support"

**Aborigines**

"The Ethnic Affairs Commission does not have a specific charter for dealing with issues relating to aboriginal communities. However I must say any promotion of the acceptance of diversity of cultures would by that very fact have a positive effect on the acceptance of the promotion of aboriginal issues as well.

I would certainly like to see a greater degree of cooperation between the aboriginal communities and the ethnic communities and at the departmental level perhaps would like to see a greater cooperation

between the Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Aboriginal Affairs departments. I would certainly welcome that."

**The Future**

"The challenge that is facing the Commission now is to proceed to the next stage.

As I have moved around the state over the last eight months I have noticed that in many cases when one deals with public servants or bureaucrats one feels their attitude towards ethnic affairs is perhaps one which says that ethnic affairs is a political issue.....that perhaps they have to do the right thing by ethnic communities because that is what their political masters want. I think the challenge now is to depoliticise ethnic affairs - to send a message across to the actual implementors of the policies that those policies are not there simply for political expediency but that ethnic affairs and meeting the needs of people of non-English-speaking background is actually about proper management. It is about achievement and excellence. It is about senior public servants meeting their responsibilities and those responsibilities include the demographic reality of Australian society. **When you've got local government areas like Marrickville which has over fifty percent of its population of non-English-speaking background you can no longer say that meeting the needs of those people is a political thing.** ■

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Please write to us.....

Our new postal address :  
P.O. Box 1266,  
ASHFIELD, 2131

**Chairman's Letter**

Dear Ethnos Readers,

The reconstruction which we we commenced some months ago is well underway - some important appointments have been made and we are developing a new style of operating and inter-reacting with the community and the government. As I see it, the issues that make up " ethnic affairs " are those of our whole society and our political process. However there are still people in government service and in the private sector who do not automatically take into account the cultural and demographic reality of our population.

As we now see it, a major part of the Commission's function is to work with those people at changing those ideas and redressing both policies and operating practices that are out of step with government policy.

To put it bluntly we prefer to discuss first rather than create noise. Results are more important than public relations and accolades for timely outbursts.

To this end we have, in recent weeks, held fruitful talks with Dr Scott about elements of the Schools Renewal Report that touch directly on the interests of children of non-English-speaking background.

I have also had a valuable meeting with the Minister for Education, Dr. Metherel, about a number of issues relating to TAFE. (I welcome the announcement by the Premier

that the Multicultural Unit in TAFE will be retained.)

Some of you might also have heard about the "Fixline" which we set up during December. The idea is to combat disinformation in the community about the E.A.C's language services in New South Wales and to gather information about instances where people have been denied an interpreter when they needed one to deal with a government organisation.

At the time of writing we have already received a good deal of valuable information and have decided to extend the service for another month until the end of January.

So please, if you know of any person of non-English-speaking background who has been denied an interpreter or had difficulties obtaining one when dealing with a New South Wales government organisation call the "Fixline" and give us whatever details you have. We will follow it up promptly.

I must take this opportunity to wish all of our readers the very best for the coming year and hope that we will continue to work together to enhance the multicultural society we have in this state for the benefit of the whole community.

CHAIRMAN

*If you know anyone who has been refused an interpreter by a government organisation in New South Wales*

**call the "fixline" on 6432211 and tell us about it.**

**WE NEED TO KNOW**

## Tenth anniversary party



More than two hundred community leaders, members of the consular corps, panel interpreters and translators and staff from the Commission's offices gathered at the head office to celebrate in a very informal way the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the organisation as a statutory authority within the New South Wales public service.

The foundation chairman of the Commission - Paolo Totaro - and a former deputy chairman - Bill Jegerow - were also present.

As well as celebrating the anniversary the party also provided an opportunity to preview the Special Ethnic Affairs Broadcast held on First of December on Radio 2SER-FM - an historic full day broadcast devoted to the multicultural essence of New South Wales.



Guests at the Commission's tenth anniversary party



Mr Kerkyasharian addressing the celebration

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Another party.....

## Ten years of the school within a school

THE CHATSWOOD INTENSIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE



A Thai trumpeter and a Japanese rock band provided part of the entertainment. So too did a play written and directed by a Korean student as well as dances from India, Malaysia, Afghanistan and the Philippines.

The tenth birthday cake came in four parts (I, E, L and C for Intensive English Language Centre) decorated in the colours of the school's logo - A Rainbow of Cultures.

Over five hundred guests including many "graduates" celebrated ten years of teaching English to newly arrived children to smooth their path into full normal high school studies. Three thousand children from fifty language groups have already passed on from the school within a school to normal high schools and normal Australian life.

The Chairman, Mr. Kerkyasharian, performed the ceremonial cutting of the Rainbow Culture cakes.

The basic function of the school as described in its official literature is "to teach the English language: to cover all aspects of development; language skills in reading and writing ( grammar, vocabulary structures, spelling, note-taking, literary analysis, guided and free composition etc) as well as listening and speaking ( listening comprehension, dictation, conversation, polite manners levels or registers of functional language, etc, correct pronunciation, intonation, stress) language for specific purposes is taught in science, Maths, Geography, History, Living Skills, Art etc. and concepts and vocabulary for these subject areas are developed."

The students also learn about Australian lifestyle and customs, school routines and subject choices and make friends and enjoy themselves.

The "school within a school" is within the Chatswood High School . It was established in September 1979 to " give students sufficient language proficiency so that they can understand and take part in the activities of Australian students and can succeed at high school studies to the best of their ability."



Passed and present pupils of the Chatswood Intensive English Language Centre

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The Ethnic Affairs  
Commission  
wishes  
all Ethnos readers  
a very harmonious  
and successful  
New Year  
for 1990



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