

THIS STATEMENT was prepared in pursuance of Section 14 (1) (a) of the Freedom of Information Act, 1989. Its aim is to provide an overview of the activities of the Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW and to provide to the public or clients of the Commission an indication of when FOI procedures may, or need not, be necessary.

### Establishment

The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW was established in terms of the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 and commenced operation on 13 March 2001.

The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW replaces the Ethnic Affairs Commission which was established in terms of the Ethnic Affairs Commission Act, 1979, and commenced operation on 1 December, 1979.

The Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 provides for the appointment by the Governor of up to nine commissioners. As at 30 June 2001, the Commission consists of one full time Chairperson, one part-time Deputy Chairperson, and five part-time commissioners.

Commissioners are appointed on the basis of their qualifications, experience, and knowledge and sensitivity to multicultural issues.

Commissioners are not appointed on the basis of their ethnicity. However, it has been the practice to rotate appointments to ensure that different ethnic groups are represented at various times.

The establishment of the Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW marks a new approach and is a significant step forward, building on the achievements of the Government of New South Wales and its Ethnic Affairs Commission over the last two decades.

The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW is responsible for promoting community harmony, participation, and access to services so that the contribution of cultural diversity to New South Wales is recognised and celebrated.



## Objectives and Functions

The objectives and functions of the Commission are detailed in part III, sections 12 and 13 of the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000.

The objectives of the Commission are:-

- (a) participation of the people of New South Wales in community life and the public decision-making process so that they can exercise their rights and fulfil their obligations,
- (b) access to government and community services that is equitable and that has regard to the linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic diversity of the people of New South Wales,
- (c) the promotion of a cohesive and harmonious multicultural society with mutual respect for and understanding of cultural diversity,
- (d) the enrichment of all sections of society through the benefits of cultural diversity,
- (e) the promotion of the principles of multiculturalism and the advantages of a multicultural society,
- (f) the promotion of social justice, community development and community initiatives for ethnic communities in New South Wales.

The functions of the Commission are:

- (a) to undertake systematic and wide-ranging consultation with people and groups with respect to its objectives,
- (b) to advise and make recommendations to the Minister to promote any of its objectives,
- (c) to investigate and report to the Minister on any matter relating to its objectives that the Commission considers appropriate or that the Minister refers to the Commission for investigation and report,
- (d) to arrange and participate in forums to promote its objectives,
- (e) to facilitate co-operative arrangements involving governmental, business, educational and community groups or bodies to promote its objectives,
- (f) to enter into agreements with public authorities in connection with their functions to promote the objectives of the Commission (including, but not limited to, the objective relating to access to government services),
- (g) to assist, and assess the effectiveness of, public authorities in observing the principles of multiculturalism in the conduct of their affairs, particularly in connection with the delivery of government services,



- (h) to assist in resolving issues associated with cultural diversity,
- (i) to provide interpreter or other services approved by the Minister,
- (j) to advise the Minister on the most effective use of funds appropriated by Parliament for programs related to its objectives (including funds for the provision of resources to community groups that promote the objectives of the Commission),
- (k) to support community initiatives that promote the objectives of the Commission,
- (l) to encourage eligible people to become Australian citizens,
- (m) to advise and make recommendations to the Anti-Discrimination Board on matters relating to discrimination and racial vilification ,
- (n) such other functions as are conferred or imposed on it by or under this or any other Act.

## Organisation

In order to carry out the functions prescribed under the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000, the Commission operates as an administrative office under the Public Sector Management Act. Its structure includes: Community Relations Service, Information and Management Services, Language Services, Human Resource Services, Finance and Accommodation Services and Multicultural Marketing and Business.

In addition, section 20 of the Act allows for the establishment of committees of commissioners or commissioners and other persons as required to assist the Commission to carry out its functions.

For the financial year ending 30 June 2001 the Commission operated on a total annual budget (accrual) of \$12.3 million. This is funded by a recurrent allocation of \$9.2 million, \$0.9 million reimbursement from consolidated fund entity and user charges of \$2.2 million. The Commission's operating budget comprises of employee related costs of \$8.7 million, \$1.8 million other operating expenses. In the 2000-2001 financial year the Commission had a budget of \$1.5 million for grants. See also Annual Report appendix for *Schedule of Major Assets*.

The Commission has offices at:

- 164 Liverpool Road, Ashfield (head office). Telephone (02) 9716 2222.
- 84 Crown Street, Wollongong. Telephone (02) 4224 9922.
- Government Office Block, 117 Bull Street, Newcastle. Telephone (02) 4929 4191.

## Advisory Committees and Sub-Committees

Refer also to the diagram *Organisational Structure – Boards and Committees*.

### Regional Advisory Councils

The Commission operates regional advisory councils to enable enhanced community input into policy formulation and community comment on prevailing regional issues. These councils are operating in the Illawarra, Western Sydney, Hunter, Northern, and Tamworth/Armidale regions. The councils are convened by part-time commissioners and their recommendations are brought to the attention of the Commission.

### Grants Advisory Committee

The role of the Commission's Grants Advisory Committee is to assist in the process of assessment of applications submitted under the Commission's Community Development Grants Program. The Committee comprises community representatives and meets to consider and make recommendations to the Commission based on the criteria and priority areas for funding stated in the guidelines of the grants program.

## Structure and Activities of the Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW

Refer also to the diagram *Organisation Structure – Functional*.

### Corporate Activities (Human Resource Services, and Finance and Accommodation Services)

Financial and human resources and accommodation services are managed by these units. Responsibilities include budgeting, financial management, risk management, purchasing, asset control, accommodation, staffing and human resource management.

### Community Relations Service

The Community Relations Service promotes the development and implementation of community relations policies across the spectrum of government activities, as outlined in the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000. The Community Relations Service develops model projects with communities and partnership organisations based on the goals of the Act.

This division includes the Regional and Rural Co-ordinators for Southern NSW, Western NSW and Northern NSW.



## **Information and Management Services**

I&MS is the primary contact between the Commission and the office of the Premier and Minister for Citizenship. It is responsible for the maintenance of efficient and effective communication between the Commission and the office of the Minister.

The areas of responsibility of I&MS include:

- Total Quality Management
- Ministerial liaison
- Grants administration
- Executive support
- Training and education
- Freedom of Information
- Corporate and strategic planning
- Annual report coordination
- Media and public relations
- Publications
- Library administration
- Community centre management
- Information technology
- Records management

The Commission's commitment to improved customer service continued to be a main focus in the implementation of Total Quality across the organisation. Total Quality became an integral part of the corporate planning process.

The development of the Commission's 1998-2001 corporate plan applied the outcomes of the Guided Self Assessment conducted by the Commission in 1996 and the Total Quality Management Planning in 1997.

## **Language Services**

The primary objective and function of Language Services is to provide efficient, cost-effective and quality interpreting and translating services to people of non-English speaking background within NSW, to ensure full participation in community life.

The services are available to all State Government departments and agencies, private and commercial organisations, community groups and individuals. Services are provided on a user-pays basis, with exemptions granted on a needs basis.

The interpreting service is available 24 hours a day.



## Planning Mechanisms

The following planning mechanisms are in place in respect of the Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW:

- (1) Meetings of the Commission are convened monthly (or more often if required) to determine policy and priorities.
- (2) The meetings of the Commission's senior executive staff play a major role in planning the activities of the Commission. These meetings are held weekly and provide a venue for the planning of day to day activities of the Commission.
- (3) The 1998-2001 Corporate Plan identified the goals of the Commission and outlined strategies to ensure the achievement of the corporate objectives. The Commission has commenced planning for the Corporate Plan 2001-2004 to ensure relevance to the Government's community relations objectives articulated in the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 and the White Paper *Building on our Cultural Diversity*.
- (4) The Government's White Paper, *Building on Our Cultural Diversity* (Ethnic Affairs Action plan 2000), outlines the future direction of ethnic affairs policy in NSW. The Plan describes proposed roles for the NSW Government in ethnic affairs, key result areas and outcomes to be achieved by the year 2000, as well as new reporting and monitoring arrangements. The three key result areas identified in the Plan are *Social Justice, Community Harmony, and Economic and Cultural Opportunities*.

To ensure the timely and efficient implementation of the Action Plan 2000, the Government requires all agencies, including statutory authorities, to provide Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statements (EAPS) on an annual basis. Each EAPS will indicate the recent achievements of the agency in implementing the Action Plan 2000, as well as foreshadowing the initiatives that will be undertaken.

To ensure that EAPS are publicly accessible and fully implemented into the core business of all government agencies, the Government now requires that EAPS be printed in each agency's annual report. The report should also give details of any Ethnic Affairs Agreements which the agency has entered into with the Commission. Furthermore, from 1997, the Commission was required to annually produce a report to Parliament on the status of ethnic affairs in New South Wales.



## Criteria for Measuring the Commission's Performance

The Commission is sensitive to community response to its policy decisions. Community Relations Service staff provide information on community reaction. In addition, the Commission has in place a community media review program to provide feedback on community reaction.

The Corporate Plan outlines a series of goals, sub-goals and strategies of the Commission for the four year period from 1998 to 2001. Pre-determined performance indicators measure the achievement of the Commission's corporate objectives.

## Effect of the Commission's Functions on Members of the Public

The Commission's functions affect the public in the following ways:

- B The provision of interpreter and translation services has immediate benefit for non-English speaking clients of the Commission both in personal matters and in their dealings with government departments.
- B Community relations policies and programs in the NSW public sector are based on the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000. The Act incorporates four Principles of multiculturalism and makes the Chief Executive Officers of public sector agencies responsible for the implementation of the principles.
- B The Act seeks to ensure that the public sector is responsive to the needs of, and the opportunities created by, a culturally diverse society.
- B The Commission's community relations programs are an avenue by which the needs of community groups may be brought to the attention of the government.
- B The Commission administers a library which is open to members of the public. Whilst it is not a lending library, members of the public are welcome to use it for reference purposes.
- B The Commission accepts submissions on matters relating to community relations, and is prepared to examine them in the context of Government policy.



## Arrangements for Public Participation in Policy Formulation

The Commission welcomes the comments of the public on issues relating to community relations and service delivery. This is achieved through the activities of its regional advisory councils, the conduct of seminars and forums, and the distribution of documents for public discussion.

When vacancies arise, membership of the regional advisory councils is invited through advertisements placed in the press, including the ethnic and regional press.

Community members of regional advisory councils are appointed for three years.

## Description of the Types of Documents Held by the Commission

### A (i) The following documents are held at the Commission and are available free of charge to the public.

- Policy documents and guidelines on the Commission's grants programs
- White Paper, *Building on our Cultural Diversity*
- Corporate Plan 1998-2001
- Annual reports
- Guidelines for exemptions from payment for language services
- Guidelines for the operation of Regional Advisory Councils

Commission reports and publications on a range of matters such as religious development in NSW, Language Services Resource Kit, Ethnic Affairs Report 1999-2000, Annual Oration, to name a few, are also available.

### (ii) Documents available for purchase

A small number of Commission publications are also available for purchase, including *The People of New South Wales - Statistics from the 1996 Census*, which provides a statistical profile of every local government area in the State.

A full list of Commission publications is available from the Commission's Public Information Officer.

### B The following documents are not normally available for public inspection:

- departmental files and records which include correspondence and file notes in respect of all of the Commission's operations.



- agendas and minutes of Commission meetings.
- departmental files in respect of staff recruitment, staff training, and staff members personal files and information.
- departmental files containing information on grant applications, and assessments of applications.
- background notes on ethnic community groups.
- documentation on requests for translations.
- documentation on interpreting assignments.

Information is stored at the Commission's offices as either traditional paper files or as computer records.

## Access Arrangements, Procedures and Points of Contact

The documents listed under part A are available from the Commission's Public Information Officer, who is located at the ground floor, 164 Liverpool Road, Ashfield. The telephone number is (02) 9716 2278, Monday, to Friday between 9.30 am and 4.30 pm.

If access to documents listed under part B is required in the context of the Freedom of Information legislation, an approach should be made to the Freedom of Information Officer at level 1, 164 Liverpool Road, Ashfield. The telephone number is (02) 9716 2747 during the same hours of business on weekdays.

**Charges for access** to the documents are in accordance with the guidelines established by the Freedom of Information Unit:

NATURE OF APPLICATION	APPLICATION FEE	PROCESSING CHARGE
Access to records by natural persons about their personal affairs	\$30 <sup>1</sup>	\$30 per hour after first 20 hours <sup>1</sup>
All other requests	\$30 <sup>1</sup>	\$30 per hour*
Internal review <sup>3</sup>	\$40 <sup>2</sup>	Nil
Amendment of records	Nil <sup>2</sup>	Nil

<sup>1</sup>subject to 50% reduction for financial hardship and public interest reasons. Pensioners who hold Health Benefits card as well as those applicants with an income who are considered to be under financial hardship are entitled to the rebate.

<sup>2</sup> refunds may apply as a result of successful internal reviews and successful applications for amendment of records.

<sup>3</sup> application fees will not be charged for internal reviews in relation to amendment of records.

