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Progress in Ethnic Affairs - Action Status of Recommendations in Participation.

On the 20th September 1979, the Premier, Mr. Wran tabled a report in Parliament on the action undertaken by the Ethnic Affairs Commission - as at the 30th June 1979 on recommendations in the Participation report.

Action has been taken on 108 of the report's recommendations.

In his ministerial statement, Mr. Wran said, among other things:

"I wish to make a ministerial statement in relation to progress in ethnic affairs the Commission has produced an Action Status report which I am now happy to release. The report shows complete or substantial implementation of more than one hundred of the recommendations (of the "Participation" report). Significant progress has been made towards implementation of a further eighty or more.

Looking back, one recognizes that the firm commitment with which the Labor Government came to office, to improve the position of people of ethnic background in our community, presented no easy task when considering the fundamental questions of discrimination and equality of opportunity to be addressed and the emphasis on re-appraisal of social attitudes and organizational structures inherent in the achievement of progressive change. The Government was nonetheless resolute in its determination to move quickly as possible and saw the sharing of this responsibility with the people of the ethnic communities themselves as an indispensable step to giving real meaning to their participation in the decision making process. To this end the Government established an interim Ethnic Affairs Commission with an open charter to report on ethnic affairs in general, and also to propose a constitution and functions for a permanent Ethnic Affairs Commission in particular. This Commission brought great credit to itself by presenting the Government with such a diverse and detailed report as Participation, containing many recommendations on which to base a comprehensive policy action plan in the field of ethnic affairs.

The Government therefore unhesitatingly accepted this report as a blue-print for action and, indeed, it immediately became a report in action through concurrent Government initiatives in a range of areas, including welfare and cultural activities, interpreting services, community languages, special teacher training, other education and health services, et cetera. Since then, the Government has passed new legislation to create a permanent Ethnic Affairs Commission, along the lines recommended to it. Under this legislation the new permanent Commission will seek to encourage the full participation of persons comprising ethnic groups in the community in the social, economic and cultural life of the community; to promote the unity of all ethnic groups in the community as a single society, consistent with the recognition of their different cultural identities; and to promote liaison and co-operation between bodies concerned in ethnic affairs. Among its functions - to cover advice, consultation and service provision over a wide area - it will be able to investigate and report to me on any aspect of ethnic affairs that it considers requires action and so monitor and advise the Government on the progress and direction of policy development on a continuing basis.

This key monitoring and advisory role is, of course, one which the present Commission has already been exercising, not only as a prelude to its Participation report, but subsequently to produce the present Action Status report covering implementation progress on the former. This role has not been easy and has presented some particular challenges to the Commission because like the Government it recognized the need for fundamental shifts in emphasis which cannot be achieved overnight and so faced up to the more difficult course of producing reform-orientated recommendations which often aim at reforming macrosystems, such as industrial and welfare legislation. Naturally, monitoring progress on such recommendations has been no simple exercise, with the impact of many proposals broadly spread across numbers of the State's more than 140 departments and authorities, but in some instances also across multiple tiers of government and/or involving both government and community organizations. Consequently the Commission has been obliged to accept at face value some of the reports it has received and to make value judgments on the extent of progress where issues are complex or touch on a whole range of areas.

The Action Status report is thus a report on - rather than an appraisal of - perceived major progress and the new Commission will be reporting to me independently by way of critique in any selected cases where it feels this to be warranted. Given this situation combined with the essentially long term nature of some Participation proposals, I am delighted to announce implementation of substantial progress on over one-third of the 289 recommendations involved and describe progress on almost one-third more. The proportion is better still when it is understood that some of the remaining recommendations are now seen by the Commission as either needing change or no longer applicable. It will be reporting to me further in these regards also.

Much has been made by the Federal Government lately about progress of the Galbally recommendations and its financial commitment to ethnic affairs. The New South Wales Government accepts these trumpeted initiatives, however, at their real worth and nothing more. For our part, we will co-operate with Canberra in its Galbally proposals so long as they are seen to be consistent with ethnic affairs policy in this State and of true benefit for those to whom this policy is primarily directed. However, we maintain real reservations that for much part the Galbally experience will provide no more than short-term palliatives and not answers to the social and structural issues which are fundamental to my Government's policy approach.

New South Wales Government can say with full assuredness that it is doing much more for ethnic affairs in this State than has ever been done before. In three years, financial commitment in this area has increased fifteen-fold from \$125,000 in 1975-76 to \$2 million in 1978-79 (see page 4 for details). This is direct expenditure associated with the activities of the Ethnic Affairs Commission alone. Only when other invisible expenditure across the whole State administration - forming part of education, health and other allocations - is also taken into account, is the full extent of our financial commitment to this important area apparent. Needless to say, in overall terms this compares more favourably with any other initiative, State or Federal, and it will grow still further in the future. On this basis, New South Wales has every right to regard itself as leader in promoting the development of ethnic affairs. By continued participation and unity of purpose we shall remain in the vanguard of this challenge. I commend the Commission's Action Status report for general information and now highlight some of the developments to which it refers.

The Government has established a permanent Ethnic Affairs Commission which is a permanent corporate body to oversight all types of ethnic affairs and to promote a range of related services. In the field of State Government employment the Government has taken action to provide people of non-English speaking background with equal access and promotion opportunities, special training for those with English language difficulties, and in sensitizing government service providers to the needs of ethnic users. In the field of employment generally the Government has established an Overseas Qualifications

Unit that is taking priority action to simplify the present complex system of recognizing overseas qualifications. We have established a living skills programme in an effort to reorientate and retrain unskilled or redundant workers handicapped by language difficulties. We are reviewing workers' compensation legislation with the ethnic experience carefully in mind.

In the field of education there has been recognition of nineteen community languages as approved subjects for the higher school certificate, with more being considered. We have provided further encouragement for the study of community languages in both primary and secondary schools. There has been expansion of bridging classes in English for overseas teachers to promote their entry to employment. Multicultural education has been included within new courses in teacher education. Courses at tertiary institutions have been expanded to train more teacher educators in English as a second language. We have increased the number of bilingual school counsellors and multicultural education consultants.

In the area of health, parental advice sessions in community languages are now being conducted at baby health centres in the Sydney metropolitan region. Prenatal clinics have been established in Sydney hospitals, especially for migrants. Plans are in operation to expand specialist interpreters in health to 100. In the field of legal services the Government is conducting a review of the operations of all legal aid services within the State and their utility for the ethnic community as well as a review of the law as it affects individuals and groups comprising the ethnic community.

In the field of information service, a new Government Information and Sales Centre has been designed with special regard for the needs of people of ethnic background. The State Library has recently established a community language cataloguing unit and set up a box-lending scheme for community language materials. In the area of extension of family accommodation, a new building policy has been adopted which will assist migrants by enabling self-contained granny flats to be constructed as extensions to family homes. The Government has provided increased multilingual advice services to country people and conducted regional surveys to define more clearly the needs of the ethnic community. I commend the Action Status report to all members for their consideration, I table the report".

PROFILE:

In each issue of ETHNOS we feature a profile of an Ethnic Affairs Liaison Officer. In this issue we introduce Joan Bielski from the Ministry of Education.

Joan Bielski needs no introduction to most people who have been associated with immigrant settlement. For more years than she cares to record Joan has been an activist and an initiator for community development issues in New South Wales.

Joan joined the Ministry of Education in 1977 as Officer-in-Charge of the Social Development Unit.

The Unit advises the Minister for Education on three major areas: Anti-discrimination, ethnic affairs and sexism. The Unit also provides assistance and information to the community on these issues.



"My major purpose is to make sure that people who were once excluded, are now included", Joan Bielski said.

Joan interprets her role of Ethnic Affairs Liaison Officer as a figure-head in the Ministry acting to ensure persons of ethnic origin are considered for positions. "I see equal opportunity as an extension of the merit principle", she said.

To ensure that all persons in the Ministry are aware of Joan's position as Ethnic Affairs Liaison Officer, she has placed a notice in the staff publication RAPPORT, issuing an invitation to all staff members to meet and discuss her role.

Joan has invited personnel from the Job Opportunity Division of the Public Service Board, to be present and explain equal opportunity initiatives. The Personnel Officer will also be present at this meeting. "I am accessible to everyone in the organisation". Joan Bielski said.

The unit is presently conducting a research project on girls of ethnic origin and their social problems.

ETHNIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION
BUDGET 1979-80

<u>A - Direct Services to the Communities</u>	\$	%
Grants to the Ethnic Communities	600,000	} 64
Provision of (Largely free) Interpreter & Translating Services	591,000	
Overseas Qualifications Unit (free service to community)	27,000	
Provision of Liaison & Information Officers (free service to community)	75,757	
Resource Centre (free service to community)	15,500	
Other	12,000	
 <u>B - Services to Community and Government</u>		
Provision of Researchers to Develop Initiatives for Implementation by Government for Ethnic Communities	133,000	} 8
Services to Media	31,169	
 C - Costs Associated with the Ethnic Affairs Commission (1 full-time Chairman, 1 full-time Secretary & 11 part-time Commissioners)	68,152	} 3
D - Administrative Back-up for all above services	514,422	} 25
	<u>2,068,000</u>	<u>100</u>
 Less estimated savings consequent upon retirements, resignations, etc.	60,000	
	<u>2,008,000</u>	
	<u><u>2,008,000</u></u>	