

# ETHNOS

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**Newsletter for Ethnic Liaison Officers, N.S.W.**  
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## POLISH IMMIGRANTS ON THE MOVE

The Polish immigrant community in Australia, which has been relatively static since the 1950's, is increasing rapidly as the result of an upsurge in migration from Poland in recent months.

"These are young people who are arriving from Vienna mainly and so far about one thousand have arrived and a further two thousand are awaiting advice from the Australian immigration authorities," explained Zuzanna Zarebska, an Ethnic Affairs Commission staff member of Polish origin.

"They are young, strong, well educated people, often with tertiary or trade qualifications. Musicians, conductors, sculptors and artists are among the new arrivals," Zuzanna said.

Zuzanna has done a wonderful job in assisting all those who have come to the Commission for help because the Commission, like many other departments and statutory authorities, initially was not geared to cope with the sudden influx of Polish-language speakers.

"One of the most serious problems for families arriving has been the question of housing," Ms. Irena Wojak a grant-in-aid welfare worker with the Ashfield Polish Welfare office said.

"Another common problem is the recognition of overseas qualifications, and the third most common problem has been the language and the need to learn the linguistic jargon used in Positions Vacant advertisements," Irena said. These facts are also borne out by the Commission's own experience.

"In the past 2 months we have dealt with close to 150 Polish people seeking recognition of their qualifications here," Nabil Kazemi of the Commission's Overseas Qualifications Unit said.

"In many cases, it is a question of my being able to inform these people of the parity between the qualifications they have earned in Poland and the qualifications here.

"Most of the cases we have dealt with so far have been resolved without difficulty as these people are well trained and should be easily absorbed into the workforce," Nabil said.

Statistics so far show that the majority of the new arrivals are able to find work within three months of their arrival, if not sooner.

*Anyone seeking information or advice about this new group of immigrants should contact Polish Grant-in-Aid worker, Ms. Irena Wojak of the Polish Welfare and Information Bureau at 182 Liverpool Road, Ashfield, Tel: 798 4005.*

#### HELPING EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

It is now nearly three months since disaster struck in Italy and an earthquake wiped out thousands of people.

For many Australians who gave generously to an appeal for the victims in the days immediately following the disaster, the earthquake has become one of a number of natural disasters which occur from time to time.

But behind the scenes at the Ethnic Affairs Commission the fate of those living in the affected southern Italian region is still very much a current concern.

"Within hours of the disaster the Premier asked us to put all the facilities of the Commission at the disposal of an Italo-Australian Committee formed to co-ordinate efforts in N.S.W. to help the victims," Ezio Scimone, Secretary to the Committee, said.

"I was seconded from my usual work at the Commission as Interpreter-in-Charge of the Workers' Compensation Interpreters' Unit to co-ordinate the administrative and accounting work behind the fund-raising.



*The Chairman of the Commission, Dr. Totaro receives cheques on behalf of the Earthquake Appeal from Mr. Peter Hilton, Superintendent, Employment and Community Services, at Australian Iron & Steel, Port Kembla, and from Mr. E. Bonacina, Director of Co.As.It. in Wollongong.*

"In the week immediately following the earthquake we maintained a telephone information service mainly staffed by volunteers for Australians with relatives and friends in the earthquake area.

"The Federal and State Government joined forces so that a computer link could be established between the Italian Embassy in Canberra and the Commission in Sydney. Volunteers and staff working around the clock answered thousands of phone calls.

"This meant we were able to give out information as it arrived from Italy.

"As part of the fund raising, 1,500 telegrams and 2,000 letters were sent informing people of the appeal and where to send donations.

"We also had a T.V. link up as part of the appeal and this meant that people were able to ring the Commission offices on the night and pledge donations. Volunteers, both from the staff and the community, answered the telephones and several thousand dollars were raised that night.

"Including the moneys collected by Radio 2EA, overall we have about \$700,000 so far from N.S.W. and we hope to reach our one million dollar target before the appeal closes and a National Committee is formed to manage the spending of the money in southern Italy," Ezio explained.

*Donations to the Appeal can still be made by sending cheques made out to the "N.S.W. Italian Earthquake Appeal Fund" to the Ethnic Affairs Commission at 140 Phillip St., Sydney or through any Bank. For further information, contact Ezio Scimone on 231 7443.*

WHAT HAS BEEN TRANSLATED LATELY ...

1. Maternity Leave is now the right of every woman working in N.S.W. who has been with the one employer continuously for 12 months part or full-time, and all details relating to leave are contained in the Maternity Leave in N.S.W. brochure.

If a pregnant woman requests maternity leave her employer is obliged to give her a minimum of six weeks and a maximum of 52 weeks unpaid leave, so long as she applies 10 weeks before the baby is due.

Both married and unmarried pregnant women are entitled to maternity leave and to establish this right, the woman must supply her employer with a doctor's certificate confirming the pregnancy.

Many of those who will be affected by this important change to the Arbitration Act are immigrant women.

Because immigrants in general do not have the same ease of access to information in the community, important changes to legislation such as this Maternity Leave amendment are regarded as priority material for translation at the Ethnic Affairs Commission.

The brochure giving details of this Leave has been translated into eight languages: Arabic, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Turkish and Vietnamese.

A distribution list for the translated brochures is now being compiled by the Women's Affairs Project Officer at the Commission and staff at the Women's Co-ordination Unit. Anyone wishing to obtain copies or make suggestions about distribution should contact:

*Women's Affairs Project Officer, Ethnic Affairs Commission  
231 7285 OR  
Women's Co-ordination Unit 279 541.*

2. Diabetes sufferers of non-English speaking background will soon be able to learn about their illness from a manual on diabetes which will be produced in community languages.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission recently arranged a meeting with more than 40 health workers from hospital and community health programs for diabetes, to discuss issues relating to immigrants with diabetes.

As a result of the meeting, a working party has now been organised to prepare a practical manual written in straight-forward language suitable for translation.

The working party, which includes Commission representation, will look at specific aspects such as culturally appropriate dietary recommendations when preparing the material.

*For further information about Health projects contact Mr. A. Dolk at the Commission on 231 7289.*

3. The Government Insurance Office produces, among other items, a document called 'At the Scene of an Accident'.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission is now going to translate this document into community languages because of the significant proportion of policy-holders who are of non-English speaking background.

*For information regarding the Translation Unit at the Commission ring Mr. Lou Ginori of the Community Interpreter and Information Service on 231 7462.*

#### EDUCATION ...

The Home Tutor Scheme is a one-to-one English tutoring program for adult migrants at home. The service began in 1974 under the direction of the Adult Migrant Education Service and the now defunct Good Neighbour Council. Today the Scheme is the responsibility of the N.S.W. Ministry of Education but, since its inception, the mainstay of the Scheme has been the dedicated group of volunteer English teachers who go into the homes of migrants unable to attend regular A.M.E.S. classes.

Volunteers do not need teaching experience but they do need to be keen to communicate with people of non-English speaking background on the basis of one afternoon or evening per week.

"This service is not only designed to provide people with opportunities to learn English but also to establish personal contact between new members of our community and those who have lived here all their life," Colleen McLean of the Home Tutor Scheme says.

"It is amazing how often this contact between an immigrant and a home tutor gives the non-English speaker the confidence to get out and make other contacts in the community and to begin to understand how the community works.

"One of the very important functions which a home tutor fulfills is that of a community information officer. These people going into the homes of isolated immigrants assist enormously by providing accurate information and advice or by being able to refer them to the appropriate organisations or agencies to obtain assistance," Colleen explained.

"And in many cases a long-lasting friendship between tutor and student develops.

"However, our constant worry is finding sufficient home tutors and we are facing a critical shortage of tutors for the Wollongong service at the moment.

"An interesting aspect of the staffing for the Scheme is that, with the introduction of Flexible Working Time in Public Service, we now have many public servants who found that this flexibility meant they were able to fit in home tutoring.

*Anyone who feels they can spare a couple of hours a week to assist an immigrant learn English should contact the Home Tutor Scheme on the following telephone numbers:*

Liverpool: 601 3326, Dulwich Hill: 560 4800  
Parramatta: 633 3115, North Sydney: 924 919

#### EDUCATION ...

And an educational story of a different kind is that relating to the now common practice of placing tertiary students for work experience.

It has become obvious at the Ethnic Affairs Commission that we are a popular choice for students seeking work experience. The Commission is extremely pleased with this aspect of its functions because it means that before students get out into the community they already have some insight into the problems of the ethnic minorities.

Two of the most recent work experience students were from the Social Welfare course at Milperra College of Advanced Education.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission has been invited by a number of these colleges, including Milperra, to act as an adviser in curriculum and course design in those courses affecting or designed to assist the community, of which minorities are a part.

*For further information, contact the Education Project Officer at the Commission 231 7282.*

### EDUCATION ...

Another type of English course run for immigrants, often predominantly immigrant women, is the summer factory vacation program.

These English classes are run jointly by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Adult Migrant Education Service and the Department of Technical and Further Education. The Commission co-operates in an advisory capacity. Most factories close at Christmas time and often this is the only opportunity immigrant workers at the factories have of learning English.

This year a particular effort has been made to attract two specific groups: older women and young women with children who cannot attend regular English courses during the year because of the lack of child-minding facilities. A living allowance is paid to those attending these courses and, if necessary, child care facilities are made available.

The Commission's representative on the Management Committee for this programme ensures, among other things, that those attending the course are aware of matters such as State Government travel concessions; and also advises on what might be the most suitable locations for these courses which are now decentralised. This year the courses are being run in Paddington and Strathfield.

The Commission also assists with publicity for the courses and is involved in assessing the effectiveness of the courses so far.

*For further information, contact Ms. Angela Bollard of the Commission 231 7285.*

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK ...

The Ethnic Affairs Commission staff are often to be found in meetings with other Government departments and authorities. This is basically part of the Commission's brief to assist other departments by working with them in an advisory capacity so that services to the non-English speaking sector of the community are accessible and relevant.

One of the more crucial meetings held recently was between the Department of Corrective Services and the Commission. Dr. Tony Vinson, Chairman of the Prisons Commission, Dr. Paolo Totaro, Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission, and senior staff from both the Commission and the Department of Corrective Services held discussions about problems regarding prisoners held on the "Governor's Pleasure".

A recent survey of all Governor's Pleasure prisoners revealed that 64% of these prisoners are of immigrant background; yet immigrants represent only 7 to 8% of the total prison population in N.S.W.

A committee, which includes Ethnic Affairs Commission representation, will now begin investigating each case where an immigrant is held at the Governor's Pleasure and attempt to establish why there are so many such immigrant prisoners, and why it is that many of them have been in custody for more than 10 years.

It is an established fact that no Australian-born prisoner has been held on Governor's Pleasure for more than 10 years.

A recent survey of psychiatrists in N.S.W. conducted by the Ethnic Affairs Commission has revealed a gross lack of bilingual and bicultural psychiatrists for ethnic groups. It is believed that one of the reasons for the problem relating to immigrant prisoners at the Governor's Pleasure is the difficulty of "assessing" some of these prisoners because of the cultural and linguistic differences.

Also discussed at the meeting with Dr. Vinson and his staff was the issue of bilingual staff recruitment policies.

## TASK FORCE ON IMMIGRANTS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Government - more commonly known as local council - is the tier of government with which the majority of people have their most direct contact. It is also the tier of government which offers people the greatest scope for participating and making a contribution to the quality of life in their own area.

Yet the newly arrived immigrant probably knows less about this level of government and its potential for assisting the individual in the community than s/he knows about Federal and State government mechanisms.

In recent years, local councils have become increasingly involved in the delivery of services, the provision of facilities, and matters of welfare and culture.

Keeping in mind this trend, the Ethnic Affairs Commission proposes to establish a task force with the Local Government Association of N.S.W. and representatives from City, Municipal and Shire Councils. The task force would be able to look into aspects of local government and its potential role in the affairs of ethnic minorities. The Commission believes that local councils need to keep their staff informed of the needs of immigrant ratepayers; that existing staff and financial resources may need to be adjusted if they are to serve these needs.

The Commission has organised a meeting for this month at which some 30 municipal council representatives will discuss the establishment of a task force, and formulate terms of reference.

*For further information concerning Local Government and immigrants, please contact Mr. Nabil Sherro at the Commission on 231 7281.*

## DEPUTY CHAIRMAN SEES E.A.L.O.'S ROLE AS VITAL

Mr. W. Jegorow, formerly part-time Deputy Chairman, has been appointed to the newly-created position of full-time Deputy Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission.

One of his primary areas of responsibility will be in developing the role of ethnic liaison officers in other State Government departments and instrumentalities.

Mr. Jegorow, originally an immigrant himself, was the first person of non-English speaking background to be appointed as a cadet in the N.S.W. Public Service in the early 1950's.

In his new position, Bill will assist E.A.L.O.'s to work with the Director of Equal Opportunity and the Equal Opportunity Co-ordinators in the Public Service who have the responsibility for developing Equal Opportunity Management Plans.

The Deputy Chairman is well known for the stand he has taken over the issue of equality of opportunity for people of immigrant background in all walks of public life.

As foundation chairman of the Ethnic Communities' Council of N.S.W., Bill made a number of representations to both Federal and State government bodies on this issue.

Prior to joining the Commission as full-time Deputy Chairman, Bill was Senior Legal Officer with the Forestry Commission and subsequently consultant to the Premier's Department on ethnic affairs.

In the longer term, his new job at the Commission will involve assisting the State Government departments and authorities to develop recruitment programs, trainee courses and in-service training schemes which will be aimed at achieving a balanced workforce in terms of women, people of ethnic background and Aborigines.

# Liasion Officer of the Month



*This month we have pleasure in introducing Ms. Bini Malcolm - Publicity Officer, National Parks & Wildlife Service.*

Bini Malcolm has taken up this position recently and brings to it a wealth of experience not only as a journalist but also as a person who has gone through the migration experience, and worked in ethnic affairs.

"My mother tongue is Africaans, my second language is Sesuto, and as a third language, I learnt English," Bini, who is originally from South Africa explained.

Since settling in Australia Bini has worked as an English teacher for adult migrants in Victoria, as well as preparing the publication "Migrants Melbourne" for the Victorian Government.

Bini subsequently moved to Sydney and worked firstly for the Ethnic Affairs Commission, then for the Public Service Board. Now, in her new position at National Parks and Wildlife, Bini sees it as an important part of her publicity work to inform the immigrant community of N.S.W. of the delights - and regulations - in our National Parks.

"With this in mind we approached the Ethnic Affairs Commission for a co-operative venture which is proving most successful whereby the Commission's interpreters assist with our holiday programme.

"During the summer holidays, at the Ku-ring-gai National Park, people can go on a "nature walk" and learn about Aboriginal/local culture and history.

"Those of non-English speaking background can have the information interpreted by the Commission's interpreter," Bini explained.

So far, six different ethnic groups have been catered for on consecutive Sundays during the summer break. In all, eight interpreters will take part in this joint venture.

*For further information about National Parks and Wildlife, contact Ms. Bini Malcolm on 237 6919, or Mr. Lou Ginori at the Commission for further information about interpreting services*