

ANNUAL REPORT
2000 – 2001

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION
For a multicultural NSW



NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT

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*The Hon. R. J. Carr MP,
Premier, Minister for Citizenship
and Minister for the Arts*



*The Hon. Morris Iemma MP,
Minister for Public Works and
Services, Minister Assisting the
Premier on Citizenship*



The Hon. R. J. Carr, MP
Premier, Minister for Citizenship,
and Minister for the Arts
Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
Sydney NSW 2000

October 2001

My Dear Premier

I have pleasure in presenting the Annual Report of the
Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW
for the year ended 30 June 2001 for presentation to Parliament.

The report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements
of the *Annual Reports (Departments) Act 1985*, as amended in
1997, and includes a statement of affairs pursuant to the *Freedom
of Information Act 1989*.

Yours sincerely

Stepan Kerkyasharian AM
Chairperson
Community Relations Commission
For a multicultural NSW



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This is the first annual report of the Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW. As such, it is an historic document. The Commission replaces the former Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales and in appreciation of their contribution this report lists all the former members.

The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW was created on 13 March 2001, the date the Governor proclaimed the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act, 2000 to commence.

Its inaugural meeting took place at Government House, opened by the Premier and witnessed by Ministers, former Commissioners of the Ethnic Affairs Commission and some two-hundred community representatives.

Parliament House was the venue for the inaugural Community Relations Forum, hosted by the Commission on 13 and 14 March. The Forum brought together people from around New South Wales to discuss issues and suggest an agenda for action for the new Commission. In her speech to delegates to the Forum, Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir, AO, Governor of New South Wales, stated that the new Commission “reflects to the whole world the genuine inclusive and fair society to which this State of New South Wales vigilantly strives”.

When introducing the legislation to Parliament, the Government stated “The Community Relations Commission will be an instrument of Parliament with the primary role of supporting and developing relationships and partnerships between people of equal standing but of diverse cultural backgrounds”.

That has been incorporated into the Act as a preamble: “This Act promotes the equal rights and responsibilities of all the people of New South Wales within a cohesive and harmonious multicultural society in which diversity is regarded as a strength and an asset, individuals share a commitment to Australia, and English is the common language”.

The Act contains the Principles of Multiculturalism, which each public authority must observe in conducting its affairs. The Act defines a public authority to include government agencies, statutory State owned corporations, local government, and other agencies.

With the strength and authority of the Act and the support of the community at the Forum, the Commission commenced its work.

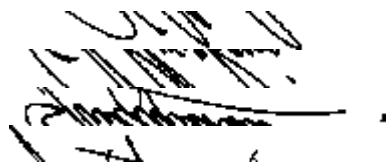
This report contains information on the activities of the Commission. It uses as its foundation the twenty-two years of ground-breaking work of the former Commission: the first government agency of its type in Australia with a role to address issues of minority groups and to positively influence government policy.

I express the Commission's appreciation to all who contributed this year to the Commission's objectives. I gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the members of the Hunter, Illawarra, Northern, Tamworth-Armidale and Western Sydney Regional Advisory Committees, along with that of their convenors; also Jarka Sipka as Chair of the Grants Advisory Committee.

I pay tribute to the work of my fellow commissioners, Deputy Chair Mr Michael Marx AM, as well as outgoing Commissioners Jarka Sipka and Mary Lee.

In all these achievements I acknowledge the contribution of the Commission staff. I commend their hard work and dedication and thank them all. On behalf of the Commission I also thank the Premier's Ethnic Affairs Adviser Mr Aldo Pennini for his support of the Commission. In all its undertakings the Commission has benefited immensely by having the Premier, the Honourable Bob Carr, as its Minister.

The Commission looks forward to consolidating its achievements for the benefit of all people living in New South Wales.



Stepan Kerkyasharian AM
Chairperson
Community Relations Commission
For a multicultural NSW

MEMBERS of the former ETHNIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION

Past Chairperson

Dott Paolo Totaro, AM

Former Deputy Chairs

Mr Wadim (Bill) Jegorow, MBE, AM
Mr Uri Themal OAM
Mr Ross Tzannes

Dr George Peponis, MB, BS
Ms Susan Bures
Ms Catherine Chung

Former Commissioners

Mr Marin Alagich, BEM, OAM
Hon John Aquilina, MP
Mr Annibal Arrarte
Mr Joe Barakat*
Ms Marta Barany, BEM, OAM
Fr Nick Bozikis
Ms Dorothy Buckland-Fuller
Clr Michael Cantali
Dr Vivian Cassar
Ms Pauline Chan
Ms Maureen Chan
Dr Nick Chuchkovich
Clr John Dal Broi
Mr Joe Doueih, MBE
Mr Alan Duncan
Sr Mary Fabian Walsh, MBE
Mr John Gebhardt, OAM
Mr David Giang
Mr Carlos Gonzalez
Mr George Harrison
Mr Fahmi Hussain
Mr Michael Kahla
Mr Con Karanges* OAM
Mrs Vivian Koutsounadis-Germanos, OAM
Mr Can Le Dang
Mrs Mary Lee
Mr Duncan Mac Leod
Ms Ching Marchich
Mrs Trudy Mills-Evers
Mr George Miltenyi
Ms Lily Mojsin

Ms Irene Moss, AO
Dr Louis Moussa, OAM
Mr Phuong Ngo
Mr Phillip Cuong Nguyen-Hoang*
Ms Lorraine Norton
Mr Keith Owen
The Hon Eddie Obeid, OAM, MLC
Ms Pilar Otaegui*
Clr Frank Pangallo, MBE
Mr Anthony Raheb, OAM*
Mr Frank Rasoni
Mr Dushan Ristevski
Mr Duilio Rufo
The Hon Helen Sham-Ho, MLC
Dr Ahmed Shboul, AM
Ms Jarka Sipka
Ms Nina Skoroszewski* OAM
Ms Jorgette Sonter
Ms Nada Spasojevic
Dr Madeleine Strong-Cincotta
Ms Maria Szajewski* OAM
Cr Steve Taskovski
Ms Sema Varova
Mr James Wakim
Ms Violetta Walsh, OAM
Dr Ron Witton
Dr Peter Wong AM, MLC
Ms Vesna Zuro

* deceased



overview

OVERVIEW of 2000–2001



The Premier launches the Commission at Government House

Left to right: Mr H. Pan, OAM; Mr S. Kerkyasharian, AM; Dott P. Totaro, AM; The Premier, The Honourable R. J. Carr MP; Dr J. Riffi; Mrs M. Aquino; Ms P. Masselos; Mr M. Marx, AM

The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW (the Commission) was launched on 13 March 2001. It was created by Parliament to implement a new approach to protect and promote the unique culturally diverse society of New South Wales.

The *Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000*, that created the Commission and replaced the Ethnic Affairs Commission, recognises and values the different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds of residents of NSW, and promotes equal rights and responsibilities for all residents of NSW. Our multicultural society is a community of communities. In it, all individuals and organisations should have an opportunity to contribute and participate in public life, as well as an equitable access to government services.

The relationships that build a community of communities enable us to maximise our potential as communities and as a State. Each community treasures its unique cultural heritage. By building relationships we share our riches to strengthen our own community, and the unity of our society at large. Through mutual respect and recognition we use and celebrate our diversity as a resource and an asset.

The Commission works in the context of developing a spirit of community harmony and inclusiveness in order to support and develop relationships between people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Dropping the term 'ethnic affairs' has not diminished the Government's commitment to provide appropriate services which take account of the culturally diverse background of the citizens of NSW. The intention of the change is to continue and capitalise on current programs and be more community oriented and strategic in identifying issues and producing solutions in partnership with Government and communities.

The functions of the Commission

In pursuing its objectives of seeking harmony and promoting participation, community development, the benefits of cultural diversity and social justice, the functions of the Commission, at a glance, are:

- B **consult** with relevant people and groups
- B **facilitate** cooperation between government, business, education and community groups
- B **arrange** forums on relevant topics
- B **support** community initiatives
- B **assist** in resolving community issues
- B **investigate** and report on community affairs
- B **provide** interpreter services
- B **make** agreements with public authorities
- B **assess** the effectiveness of public authorities in observing the principles of multiculturalism
- B **advise** the Minister on the most effective use of funds
- B **advise** and make recommendations to the Minister
- B **recommend** measures to the Anti-discrimination Board
- B **encourage** eligible people to become Australian citizens

Commission Services and Activities

Community involvement and support

The Commission offers assistance and encouragement to communities in establishing organisations, clubs and committees. It initiates and implements projects in partnership with others to address community needs.

The Commission also provides grants to assist community organisations to better serve their communities in the process of integrating into Australian society. It provides guidance to community newspapers and radio stations to get access to government advertising and sources of information.



Community media review

The Commission monitors all major community newspapers which allows the government and the members of Parliament to know what people in the communities are thinking - what their views are of current initiatives, what they think of ideas being discussed in politics and in the media, what needs are not being met within particular communities and what activities and changes are occurring in various communities. The review process tells us the level of interest in various communities of projects or new laws, either proposed or announced by the government.

A place in public debate

The Commission takes part in debates on community issues in public forums and within the media. It investigates issues of community concern and publishes reports of the findings. It fosters closer relations between local communities and the police. It encourages the acceptance of the strength and economic value of diversity through the Commission's highly respected National Multicultural Marketing Awards.

Comprehensive language services

The Commission provides interpreting and translation services for customers of New South Wales government agencies and private organizations. Its services can be provided in at least 80 languages. The Commission also has a 24-hours service to meet the needs of police or emergency services at any time in any place.

Listening to the regions

The Commission created regional advisory councils to advise on matters affecting specific regions of the state. The Councils comprise relevant local and regional agencies, community organisations or individuals to reflect the diversity and issues of each region.

A guide for the public service

The *Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000* describes as a key objective of the Commission the achievement of "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". In relation to this objective, it lists as a function of the Commission "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".

It further requires that the Commission prepare annually a report to Parliament on the state of community relations in the state in which it must include "an assessment of the effectiveness of public authorities in observing the principles of multiculturalism in the conduct of their affairs".



The Commission implemented those objectives and functions in the context of the requirements of the Act for public authorities to implement the principles of multiculturalism.

Commissioners, regional advisory councils and staff

The Commission consist of up to nine commissioners comprising one full-time chairperson and eight part-time. They are appointed by the Executive Council on the basis of their knowledge, expertise and ability to contribute to the achievements of the objectives of the Commission.

The Commission established regional advisory councils to advise on matters relating to its functions or on matters referred by the Commission. A council comprises a commissioner, who is the chairperson of the council, representatives of relevant local or regional agencies, community organisations or individuals.

The Commission has five key service areas, the Community Relations Service, Finance and Accommodation Services, Human Resource Services, Information and Management Services, and Language Services.

Achievements

During the year, the Ethnic Affairs Commission worked on the outcome of the comprehensive and wide-ranging community consultation process leading to the drafting and passage of the *Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000*.

Year 2000 delivered the benefit of multiculturalism worldwide through the success of the Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Chair of the Commission was the ex-officio chair of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) Multicultural Advisory Committee. The Committee played a useful role in bringing this dimension into the planning of the Games.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission supported a wide range of activities related to the Games including the opening ceremony, ticketing and the wearing of language badges. It worked closely with local government authorities to create events which showcased cultural diversity.

A series of nine *Street Festivals* were organised by the Commission, on behalf of the New South Wales Government, in order to share the city's diversity with visitors from around the world.

With the assistance of grants from the Commission, the local government councils in Auburn, Canterbury, Fairfield, Kogarah, Leichhardt, Liverpool, Marrickville, Parramatta, Willoughby, Hornsby and Penrith took on the role of mounting and publicising the festivals at the local level.

Each festival provided excellent opportunities for co-operation between various ethnic communities, especially in suburbs where multicultural festivals had not previously been staged. Following on from the success of the Sydney Olympic 2000 Street Festivals Project, the Commission will support a similar project run in conjunction with Carnivale 2001.

The Commission supported SOCOG's *Samsung Athletes' Family Host 2000* program, which was part of Sydney's original bid for the games. The Commission facilitated and assisted hosts to meet the cultural and linguistic requirements of guests. Families from culturally diverse backgrounds were encouraged to participate in the program by hosting people from their own background or same religious belief. Under this program, approximately 2,000 hosts were recruited and approximately 1,200 guests were welcomed.

The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games *Community Hospitality Project* was a successful demonstration of the city's cultural diversity and assisted in ensuring the 2000 Games were inclusive of the whole community. A program manager based in SOCOG's Multicultural Affairs Program was appointed to co-ordinate and support a wide range of community activities which included the preparation of guides and organisation of receptions, functions, events and drop-in places for athlete teams and overseas visitors of the twenty-one culturally diverse communities that participated in the project.

The Commission was involved in the preparation of seventeen *Community Profiles* to provide a snapshot of our culturally diverse community, targeting visiting and international media. These were jointly published with SOCOG and comprised information about the community's population size, major religious groups, history of migration to Australia, community structure, social and cultural life, sporting interests and local media contacts. These were available through the official SOCOG website and were also distributed at the Australian Technology Park during the Games period. A great success, the community profiles were also extensively used by the *Samsung Athletes' Family Host 2000* program.

In February 2001, the Commission presented the Ethnic Affairs Report to Parliament. The *Ethnic Affairs Commission Act* was amended in 1996 to require the then Ethnic Affairs Commission to prepare a report annually to the Minister on the status of ethnic affairs in New South Wales. Agencies are required to include their Ethnic Affairs Priority Statement (EAPS) programs and plans in their annual reports. The Commission monitors agencies' compliance with this requirement in its Ethnic Affairs Report to Parliament.

The *Ethnic Affairs Report 2000* is the fourth such report prepared under the legislation. The Report was presented to the Premier and Minister for Ethnic Affairs in February 2001, for tabling in the NSW Parliament. The report provides an analysis of ethnic affairs arrangements in NSW, grouped under the three key result areas in the NSW Government's Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000 – social justice; community harmony; and economic and cultural opportunities. The Report is an excellent overview of achievements and developments in ethnic affairs in the State.

Key agencies assess their performance against the Standards Framework and report to the Commission. Commission staff then use the Standards Framework to undertake a consistent and accurate assessment of agencies against detailed selection criteria. The Commission then reports in detail on twenty key agencies each year.

The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW was formed in March 2001. In keeping with the first legislated function of the Commission, its first public action was to host the inaugural Community Relations Forum at Parliament House. It was an historic occasion, where, through a focused, systematic and extensive consultation with numerous community groups, the community's views were formally recorded in the form of resolutions which the Commission will deliver on. The forum will be an annual event.

The inaugural Community Relations Forum, held on March 13 and 14, sought direct input from communities to government policy and the Commission's strategic plan. Resolutions from the final session will inform the strategic direction for the Commission in the coming year.

The Forum sought participation from key community organisations. Representatives from around two hundred community organisations, from rural, regional and metropolitan NSW participated in the consultations. It was the largest and most representative community relations forum ever undertaken to discuss issues of common interest in multicultural NSW. As such, this is the first initiative of this nature in NSW.

Approximately two hundred and seventy people represented over two hundred community organisations from throughout rural, regional, remote and metropolitan NSW at the Forum.

Since its creation, the Commission has commenced work with community organisations and across government to foster partnerships between community and government and to provide contact points for responding to the needs of and for maximising the benefits from our culturally diverse society. The Commission also continued to build on the past achievements of the EAC, particularly with projects aimed at harnessing the organisation's effectiveness in the delivery of key services. These achievements are also highlighted in the EAPS section of this report.



Challenges

In July 2000, the Council on the Cost and Quality of Government conducted a review of the Commission, that continued into 2001. The review was a collaborative project aimed at providing an outcome to enhance efficiencies in the Commission. The review required the involvement of staff who worked on a full and part-time basis with the Council. The input from the Commission, particularly at management level, was extensive and involved. The recommendations of the review have been incorporated in the Commission's corporate plan and some have already been advanced. The progress of the recommendations is discussed regularly by the Community Relations Commission Implementation Committee.

The achievements of the Commission have been realised through the support and commitment of commissioners and staff, past and present.

The Community Relations Commission will soon release its first corporate plan that identifies critical success factors and performance indicators against which future annual reports will be based.



OBJECTS and FUNCTIONS of the COMMISSION

The Community Relations Commission of New South Wales was established as a statutory body on the 13th of March, 2001 under the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000. The Commission supersedes the Ethnic Affairs Commission.

The objectives of the Commission are:

- B 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,
- B the promotion of a cohesive and harmonious multicultural society with mutual respect for and understanding of cultural diversity,
- B the enrichment of all sections of society through the benefits of cultural diversity,
- B the promotion of the principles of multiculturalism and the advantages of a multicultural society,
- B the promotion of social justice, community development and community initiatives for ethnic communities in New South Wales.

The functions of the Commission are:

- B 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,
- B 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,
- B to arrange and participate in forums to promote its objectives,

- B to facilitate co-operative arrangements involving governmental, business, educational and community groups or bodies to promote its objectives,
- B 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),
- B 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,
- B to assist in resolving issues associated with cultural diversity,
- B to provide interpreter or other services approved by the Minister,
- B 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),
- B to support community initiatives that promote the objectives of the Commission,
- B to encourage eligible people to become Australian citizens,
- B to advise and make recommendations to the Anti-Discrimination Board on matters relating to discrimination and racial vilification,
- B such other functions as are conferred or imposed on it by or under this or any other Act.



Part 1 of the Community Relations Commission and Principles for Multiculturalism Act 2000 enacts the following principles of multiculturalism:

- (1) Parliament recognises that the people of New South Wales are of different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds, who, either individually or in community with other members of their respective groups, are free to profess, practise and maintain their own linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic heritage. It does so by supporting and promoting the following principles of multiculturalism:
 - (a) **Principle 1** – All individuals in New South Wales should have the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to, and participate in, all aspects of public life in which they may legally participate.
 - (b) **Principle 2** – All individuals and institutions should respect and make provision for the culture, language and religion of others within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the common language.
 - (c) **Principle 3** – All individuals should have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of and participate in relevant activities and programs provided or administered by the Government of New South Wales.
 - (d) **Principle 4** – All institutions of New South Wales should recognise the linguistic and cultural assets in the population of New South Wales as a valuable resource and promote this resource to maximise the development of the State.
- (2) Parliament also recognises that those principles are based on citizenship. The expression *citizenship* is not limited to formal Australian citizenship, but refers to the rights and responsibilities of all people in a multicultural society in which there is:
 - (a) a recognition of the importance of shared values within a democratic framework governed by the rule of law, and
 - (b) a unifying commitment to Australia, its interests and future.The principles of multiculturalism are to be construed accordingly.
- (3) The principles of multiculturalism are the policy of the State.
- (4) Accordingly, each public authority must observe the principles of multiculturalism in conducting its affairs.
- (5) It is the duty of the chief executive officer of each public authority to implement the provisions of this section within the area of his or her administration.

