

The Green Paper, *Cultural Harmony The Next Decade 2002 – 2012* consisted of two parts: an Evaluation of the *Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000*, and the Green Paper proper, which contained recommendations and proposals for the NSW Government's agenda in the area of community relations for the next decade.

The responses of agencies and organisations to the recommendations arising from the Evaluation are summarised in Attachment 3 to this White Paper.

What follows is a summary of key issues identified in the Green Paper and by the responses and submissions received from individuals, community organisations, and government and non-government agencies during the consultation process that followed the publication of the Green Paper.

**The summary gives an overview of perceptions and views, some of them contentious, expressed during the consultation process. It does not necessarily reflect current Government policies or priorities.**

However, the Evaluation of the *Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000* also produced a considerable range of recommendations which could be readily addressed. Some of these have already been acted upon by the relevant agencies; others have been addressed by the current Government's pre-election undertakings. Where relevant, these have been highlighted.

NSW Government initiatives addressing multicultural issues flowing from the March 2003 election, which now form government policy, are highlighted in this section.

The Green Paper identified a range of issues which it considered "will always exist and continue to influence the success of multicultural policies", and listed these as:

- demographic and social trends
- differences between metropolitan and rural and regional areas of the State
- the immigration program
- the approach to refugees and asylum seekers
- settlement services
- employment and skills recognition
- the effect of international events.

These issues were taken up and commented upon by respondents to the Green Paper, but were weighted differently. A number of related issues were also raised.



## Demographic and Social Issues

### Our ageing population

A major feature of the demography of New South Wales identified in the Green Paper and borne out in the 2001 census statistics was that, in common with most western countries, the population of the State is ageing. The proportion of the population reaching the traditional age of retirement is increasing, while the proportion of younger working adults in the population is decreasing.

This trend is even more evident in some of the ethnic communities whose members immigrated as young people during the employment boom of the 1960s and 1970s, and have now reached or are approaching the traditional age of retirement.

The Green Paper identified the “need to provide adequate, culturally appropriate aged care services” which would require “ongoing action by relevant agencies”.

A number of submissions strongly agreed with this observation. Ageing people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were seen as highly vulnerable, often socially isolated, with an increasing array of problems, which may include language-loss of all but the mother tongue, dementia, and palliative care needs.

It is noted however, that residential aged care is the responsibility of the Commonwealth government. The NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care has responsibility for the administration of the funding and delivery of the Home Care and Community Program.

The EAPS program was identified by some respondents as having an important role in monitoring services to ensure that programs for the ageing were inclusive of people and communities of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

### Youth

The Green Paper expressed a concern, arising from its consultation process, that “a disproportionate number of young people from certain cultural groups were becoming involved in risk-taking or anti-social behaviour.”

Several respondents took issue with this, criticising the Green Paper on the grounds that it represented young people as a “problematic group with issues”, and that there was a need to highlight the positive aspects of young people, their potential, and particularly the capabilities and achievements of young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Media portrayal of young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds was identified in several submissions as an issue of concern.

Several submissions included recommendations to the effect that young people should be specifically included or represented in consultation processes.

The NSW Government will designate one Commissioner on the Community Relations Commission as a representative of youth from NSW culturally diverse communities.

Other responses asserted that strategies to address the issue of anti-social or risk-taking behaviour could not be developed in isolation from the issues of post-compulsory education provision and youth unemployment, and should address the situations creating the trend (“target the causes, not the youngster”), such as unemployment, the high cost of accessing post-compulsory education, and lack of appropriate youth programs.

While stereotyping, both of young people because of their youth, and racial stereotyping groups of young people (especially in relation to reporting of crime), was seen as an issue that needed to be addressed, it was also evident that some communities in particular needed appropriate assistance for their young people.

Additional English (ESOL) classes, extended recreational programs, and appropriate youth counselling and refuge facilities were identified as other initiatives that could be introduced.

The NSW Government will allocate \$1.5 million to set up the Johnny Warren Soccer Academy, a world class Soccer School of Excellence to help some of our best young NSW players to develop their skills in Australia. The Academy will be located at the Homebush Bay Olympic precinct.

The Green Paper observation that community harmony is impacted upon by youth issues was supported by the submissions, which recognised that these issues require an appropriate response, not only from agencies such as the police and education authorities, but also from parents, the media, and the broader community.

As one agency observed, however, considerable care needs to be taken in devising the right mix of policy and programs to assist young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to participate in Australian life without facing stigmatisation. Programs which emphasise inclusion and the natural assets of young people should be promoted.

The NSW Government will:

- allocate an additional \$35,000 to the *Youth Partnership with Arabic-speaking Communities* program to train seven new youth liaison team members and expand the program in the Rockdale area.
- establish a NSW Youth Partnership with Pacific Islander communities similar to the successful Arabic youth partnership, with funding of \$250,000.

*In the 2003 Budget, \$1.4 million was allocated to the ongoing Youth Partnership with Arabic-speaking communities, and \$1.1 million over three years to the newly established Youth Partnership with Pacific Island communities.*

Other issues relating to youth raised by the submissions included the natural gathering places where youth congregate, and whether security guards are appropriately trained to cope with young people in a way that would promote harmony.

Finally, respondents pointed out that youth from big cities experience life differently from youth in regional and rural areas, and initiatives to address youth issues must take this into account.

## **People with a disability**

Several submissions strongly criticised the Green Paper for inadequate consideration of the needs of people with a disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

As one submission put it: “One group not mentioned under demographic and social trends are people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with disabilities. These individuals are increasing in number, are often socially if not geographically isolated, and may require support from a range of departments and services”.

As our population ages, the probability increases of a higher incidence of disability within the community as a whole, including ethnic communities, with an increasing demand on services as a result.

People with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds confront multiple barriers to their meaningful participation in the community. These barriers may not only include the nature of their disability, but the additional disadvantages derived from their living in a community that does not address their needs according to their linguistic or cultural background.

An example of this is the situation for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds suffering mental illness. Apart from their need to access appropriate medical services, there is also the need for them to be able to access public housing, and there may be interactions with the police and justice systems which need to be addressed to ensure that social justice obligations are met.

It has been claimed that almost all refugees and asylum seekers have suffered some level of trauma and torture leading up to or during their efforts to reach asylum, and these people will also have long term medical and psychological needs.

An important component of meaningful participation for people with a disability from culturally and linguistically diverse communities is representation on decision-making bodies. The work of advocacy bodies in this area was acknowledged in the submissions.



## **Metropolitan and Regional and Rural issues**

The Green Paper addressed issues concerning ethnic communities in regional and rural areas, and geographically isolated people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in two parts of the paper.

Responses and submissions generally agreed with the Green Paper's comments in the section entitled "Differences between metropolitan and rural and regional areas of the state", and supported the recommendations contained in the section entitled "Regional and rural programs".

Generally, it was acknowledged by government agencies that there are clear and significant differences in the levels of specialist service provision between metropolitan and rural areas, and differences in the larger and smaller groups in rural areas. This is essentially a product of demographics, but also arises from the financial complexity, in any service area, of supporting delivery to a small client base.

There is not only a difference between metropolitan and region/rural areas, there are also considerable differences between and even within regions. As one smaller shire pointed out, its bounds contain people from a large number of countries of origin, but the sum total and proportion of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the shire is still comparatively small. This makes delivery of a range of culturally appropriate services quite expensive on a cost per head basis.

Small total numbers not only have an impact on financial planning. There is also an attitudinal perspective. As one submission from a country shire stated: "Due to the limited experience of regional areas [such as this shire, which has less than 10% of its population born overseas] with multiculturalism, it appears to have limited applicability to our situation"!

Several submissions also highlighted the impact of geography. Distance translates into time (for travel) and cost. Access, for example to English language courses at a local TAFE, may be severely limited because of a lack of public transport. The cost of access to many other such services, readily accessible in metropolitan areas, is much higher for isolated rural people.

Several submission contained reminders that ageing, disabled, and young people, and women, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds faced needs that were often made even more complex by social and geographical isolation and the difficulty of accessing services, and may require multiple forms of assistance from a range of agencies.

The Department for Women drew attention, for example, to the fact that 77 per cent of settler arrivals in remote Australia were from the family stream, and that there were significantly more females with poor English language proficiency than males amongst arrivals from most birthplace groups. Such data, it is suggested, should influence the planning and delivery modes of tuition programs, child care provision, and health services.

A considerable number of the submissions which addressed the regional/rural issue called for newer, more innovative strategies, or a different model for service provision “out there”.

As one submission put it: “There is a need for government and non-government agencies to look at appropriate service delivery models for rural areas, rather than duplicating metropolitan service delivery models”.

Some concern was expressed at the number of consultations on similar issues held separately with substantially the same groups of people, by State and Commonwealth authorities.

The need for a more co-ordinated cross-agency, cross-sectorial, whole-of-government approach, with an emphasis on networks and partnerships, was reinforced.

The State Library of NSW was cited as one example of a public authority which, because of its network of public libraries (two-thirds of which are in regional/rural areas) has been able to provide comparable levels of service across NSW. It is currently adapting its mainstream services, where applicable, to serve people of language backgrounds other than English.

The provision of appropriate and effective services is seen as crucial to stopping the drift to the cities, and in encouraging newly-arrived immigrants to move to regional areas, rather than settle in the Sydney basin. As one submission stated: “If we want people to stay in regional and rural NSW, we need to attend to their needs”.



## Migration Issues

Responses to the sections in the Green Paper on immigration policy, refugees and asylum seekers testified to a very high level of concern within community organisations and across agencies at the current policies of the Commonwealth government. The Green Paper, in fact, came in for criticism in a number of submissions, for not taking a stronger position on these issues.

Generally, the view put forward was that “a healthy social mix of skilled immigrants, family reunion migrants and refugees is desirable, rather than a policy approach that views family reunion migrants and refugees solely as sums of their deficits”.

Initiatives to attract immigrants to regional/rural areas are supported, but as several submissions asserted, appropriate infrastructure and levels of service are required for such initiatives to result in long-term success.

One submission contended that there is a considerable “brain drain” of the children of immigrants attracted to better salaries in Europe and Asia and to their cultural origins. The submission raised the issue of the need to establish how significant this pattern is, and to develop strategies to reduce the loss of skilled people.

### The approach to refugees and asylum seekers

Concerns regarding the Commonwealth’s overarching immigration policies flowed into its specific policies regarding refugees and Temporary Protection Visa holders (TPVs), one submission stating that “the poverty, alienation and discrimination experienced by TPV holders is a national disgrace”.

There has been considerable cost-shifting from the Commonwealth to the States. This is evidenced by the State government providing services which are essentially the responsibility of the Commonwealth.

Several professional bodies expressed their concerns regarding:

- current long-term detention of asylum seekers which provides an inappropriate response in many cases
- the probability of long-term impact of current policies and their consequent impact on the refugees, and on the State’s health system
- the cost to voluntary welfare organisations in particular, in helping TPV holders.

Several submissions paid tribute to the contribution already being made to the economy and to their local communities by specific refugee groups; others referred more generally to the significant contribution made to Australian society in the arts, academia and economics by refugees.

### **Settlement services**

Submissions and respondents supported the concern raised in the Green Paper at the Commonwealth government's policy of restricting access to many government services for a period of two years after an immigrant's arrival in Australia. Concerns focussed not only on the long-term effects on immigrants and their families, with possible long-term costs to the State, but also on the burden of current support being shifted from the Commonwealth to the voluntary welfare organisations.

Possible negative effects identified included long-term unemployment; physical and mental health issues; family breakdown and domestic violence; and long-term poverty, with the possibility of this resulting in a permanent under-class.

### **Housing**

There was some criticism that the housing needs of newly-arrived immigrants and refugees had not been adequately addressed in the Green Paper.

Housing was identified also as a particular need of single parents, people with disabilities, and victims of domestic violence from within the migrant communities.



## **Responses to the Proposed Plan of Action 2012**

The proposals for the *Plan of Action 2012* set out in the Green Paper received wide and strong support from the agencies, community organisations and individuals who participated in the consultations.

Several submissions, however, expressed concern that the level of resourcing of the Community Relations Commission was not adequate to support the expanded role envisaged for it.

There were also a number of submissions that felt that the time-frame of the Plan of Action was too long, and that shorter-term action plans and monitoring processes should be built into it, to allow for more frequent evaluation of outcomes.

An important initiative proposed in the Green Paper was the creation of four new Key Objectives to underpin the Community Relations Plan of Action 2012. These Key Objectives, which provide an implementation focus to the Principles of Multiculturalism, are:

- Leadership
- Community harmony
- Access and equity within a framework of social justice obligations
- Economic and cultural opportunities.



## Leadership

The first of the Key Objectives was strongly supported, and the proposals for providing training for community leaders in working with the media were welcomed.

The role of the Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW, and the degree of autonomy that it currently enjoys to speak out on contemporary community issues, was seen as a crucial strength reinforcing the government's leadership role in multiculturalism.

At the community consultations on the Green Paper there was general support for a statement from the floor that “there needs to be a greater emphasis on the role community leaders can play in educating their own communities about community harmony issues and on activities that bring together different ethnic groups involved in fostering community harmony”.

Several submissions pointed out that leadership entailed educating the community, and that the Department of Education and Training was not the sole agency that should be given this responsibility. A whole range of other agencies and organisations have critical roles to play in terms of civic engagement and addressing the needs of particular communities.

Several submissions called for a greater role for youth. As one community organisation put it: “The leadership in many organisations is ageing and does not have the energy or media savvy to adequately represent their organisations. It is important that we find ways to encourage the younger generation to fill leadership roles in these communities”.

A number of the submissions called for local government to become more closely engaged in providing leadership in implementing the Principles of Multiculturalism.



## Community Harmony

The second Key Objective was strongly endorsed, and there was wide support for the implementation of information, education and communication strategies to promote and maintain community harmony and tolerance.

As noted in the Green Paper, the legislation which created the Community Relations Commission has many strong features which support the notion of community harmony. The legislation:

- recognises and values cultural diversity
- promotes equal rights and responsibilities
- acknowledges that diversity is a strength and an asset
- notes that individuals share a commitment to Australia
- acknowledges English as the common language
- states that people must be free to profess, practice and maintain their own heritage
- maintains that all individuals should be able to participate in public life
- acknowledges common legal and institutional frameworks
- maintains that activities and programs must be open to all regardless of background
- recognises that linguistic and cultural backgrounds are a valuable resource
- states that citizenship confers both rights and responsibilities
- promotes shared values within a democratic framework governed by law
- calls for a unifying commitment to Australia, its interests and future.

One of the submissions strongly urged that the Community Relations Plan of Action 2012 specify “as a fundamental principle, that cultural harmony in this state is influenced by all institutions - businesses, local councils, churches, industry associations, the media, education and training institutions, non-government organisations and the federal Government. It is not just the responsibility of State Government agencies.”

There was very strong support for the Green Paper’s emphasis on the need to ensure that any public debate on community issues is based on solid facts so as to put into perspective any comments that might otherwise sow the seeds of division.

It was felt that there is a “pressing need for the Australian public to be able to access accurate information, expressed in clear unemotive and accurate language. Reporting on recent [2001-2002] events by the media for the most part only compounded the general confusion, hindered rational debate and contributed to community tension”.

The vilification of the Sikh community in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 tragedy was quoted as one reminder of how a poorly-informed public can generalise from one community to another.

### Valuing our cultural diversity

The pivotal role of the school sector in promoting and maintaining community harmony was acknowledged, and several submissions paid tribute to the achievements of schools, particularly public schools, in bringing together young people from all backgrounds on the basis of harmony, respect and tolerance.

However, several respondents also noted that the crucial roles played by other agencies, such as those in the areas of health, police and justice, tourism, sport and recreation, community services and local government, should also be recognised.

The Green Paper's identification of the need to develop programs to reinforce the civic values underpinning citizenship was supported.

The NSW Government will amend the secondary school curriculum to ensure Civics and Citizenship and Multiculturalism are included in all Years 7-10 syllabuses.

*This policy is in process of implementation, following approval of cross curriculum content statements in 2002.*

In its revision of Years K-10 syllabuses, the NSW Government is ensuring that Civics and Citizenship and Multiculturalism are incorporated across the curriculum.

Other strategies in the education sector proposed in the Green Paper were supported by respondents, and have been taken up and expanded by government.

The NSW Government will:

- ◆ introduce a new Ministerial Award in Education for government and non-government schools, recognising efforts by schools in promoting a cohesive community
- ◆ develop and expand cultural exchange programs in schools, with a focus on sharing experiences and promoting harmony – based on a successful exchange involving Year 4 and Year 6 children at Newport Public School and Punchbowl Public School

*Draft guidelines for cultural exchange have been developed for the cultural exchange initiative, and a reference group created for the Ministerial Award.*

There was strong support for the involvement of parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the extra-curricula activities of their children's schools, and for empowering the culturally diverse groups within school communities.

It was noted however that parents of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds face certain barriers in becoming involved with the school.

Parents whose language is other than English, especially those from new and emerging communities, face language barriers. Despite considerable effort and progress on the part of many schools, school information notes and circulars are not always translated, and appropriate interpreting services are not always available.

Many parents also lack confidence in approaching schools and teachers, sometimes because their own school background in their country of origin influences their perception of schools, often because of unfamiliarity with the NSW schooling system.

Within the submissions there were calls for improved translating and interpreting services, and also the expansion of translated information on parenting to a wider range of ethnic communities.

The NSW Government will translate the *For Parents* module into Filipino, Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese to assist parents of HSC students.

*The module has been translated into the four languages and put online.*

Apart from addressing cultural harmony in schools, educational programs are offered by other agencies. The NSW Heritage Office, for example, noted that while its activities were included under Key Objective 4 in the Green Paper, there is also a case for including the educational role of the Migration Heritage Centre within the Community Harmony objective.

The NSW Government will relocate the Migration Heritage Centre to the Powerhouse Museum, gaining access to the expertise of curatorial and conservation staff of Australia's largest museum of social history and design.

*This initiative has now been implemented.*

The Migration Heritage Centre will retain its independent identity and build on its record of achievement and community support by developing partnerships with key stakeholder community groups and state cultural institutions. The Centre's physical location at the Powerhouse Museum will ensure enhanced access to expertise, while bringing the Museum into contact with its extensive migrant and refugee community network.

Aside from school and community education programs, another strategy for promoting community harmony suggested in the consultations was to develop initiatives that enhance the profile of immigrants by publicising their achievements and contribution to our society.

The NSW Government will introduce an annual Volunteering Award to recognise the contribution of individuals and organisations within migrant communities. The awards will be coordinated by the Community Relations Commission.

### **Anti-racism and anti-discrimination**

Notably, while few of the submissions on the Green Paper addressed issues of racism or ethnicity-based discrimination, harassment or vilification, the achievements to date in multicultural and anti-racism education were acknowledged, and it was recommended that these achievements continue to be built on.

One respondent was of the opinion that the range of legislation and penalties in place in New South Wales to deter racism and discrimination should have been outlined in the Green Paper.

Another dimension to building community harmony, however, is the development of initiatives to address incidents that cause or have potential to cause community tensions.

Two respondent organisations supported proposals for research to be carried out on the underlying causes of actions which lead to discrimination and racism, and one agency called for the Community Relations Commission to develop "clear, specific and practical anti-racism strategies for promulgation within agencies".

The need for ongoing intervention strategies to resolve existing and potential community tensions was recognised by several of the respondent agencies and organisations.

The NSW Government will:

- target police recruitment from diverse backgrounds and newly arrived immigrant groups to create a workforce that reflects the diversity of NSW, and ensure police services meet the needs of all communities.

*The NSW Police initiatives are in the process of being initiated.*

- continue the operation of the Cabramatta City Watch
- provide \$424,625 to fund proposals supporting Pacific Islander community development under the Mount Druitt Community Solutions package
- allocate \$3.1 million to the Canterbury-Bankstown Community Solutions plan to support such programs as:
  - initiatives to deal with family and domestic violence, including bilingual case workers and education campaigns
  - support to families and young people of Pacific Islander background
  - network of Arabic and Korean employers involved in a range of youth employment strategies including helping to develop skills
  - establishing a Community Harmony Roundtable
  - sport and recreation strategies to improve participation.
- implement programs targeting migrant communities through the Warrawong-Berkeley Community Solutions package, including:
  - \$215,800 to establish a Community Safety Coordination Project
  - \$200,000 to improve community safety and access to services for Muslim women and young people
  - \$48,000 for programs targeting young people from culturally-diverse backgrounds who live in Cringila and the surrounding suburbs.

*A total of 13 projects are in operation, and others are in the development and recruitment stages.*

## Religious tolerance

Few of the submissions addressed the issue of religious tolerance, which was identified in the Green Paper as being of considerable importance in maintaining community harmony.

Those submissions that did comment, agreed with the Green Paper's position and supported the leadership role of the Community Relations Commission in maintaining ongoing contact and liaison between religious leaders, providing advice and using its influence to protect the Principles of Multiculturalism as they relate to religious practices, and in taking appropriate action if and when required to address concerns which can lead to community tensions.

One community organisation also commented that, "freedom of religion is undoubtedly an absolute requirement. It should, however, also include freedom **from** religion, considering that not everybody is a churchgoer or believes in a god".

## Aboriginal reconciliation in relation to ethnic communities

Many of the submissions queried why the issue of Aboriginal Reconciliation did not feature more strongly in the Green Paper.

Although indigenous people are a key element in this State's approach to Cultural Harmony, the NSW Government initiatives for Aboriginals are addressed separately through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

In its response to the Green Paper, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs pointed out that Aboriginal people, as indigenous people, and the Government have a unique relationship. This is primarily reflected in terms of bicultural/partnership policy. Indigenous issues are not necessarily the same as those facing other ethnic minorities in New South Wales.

The recommendation in the Green Paper that the Community Relations Commission continue to look for opportunities to further the reconciliation process through the involvement of ethnic community organisations in New South Wales was widely supported.

## Impact of international events

The recognition in the Green Paper of the potential impact of international events on community harmony was commended by respondents. Several organisations reported specific instances of how events overseas had impacted upon the communities that they served.

However, there was some criticism of the Green Paper's focus on taking up Australian citizenship as a strategy for reducing this impact.

Although taking up Australian citizenship may send a powerful signal of commitment to Australia, it was argued that many of those who were the targets of vilification as a result of recent overseas events are refugees or TPV holders who are not in a position to take out citizenship.

Refugees who come to this country to escape from ethnic, political or religious conflict face an extra burden when the wider community associate them with distant events (or with their persecutors).

It is important to distinguish between people's concerns for injustices and tragedies in their country of origin, and the negative reaction to them from a proportion of the Australian community. Vilification of this group by certain people within the wider public has been on the basis of ethnicity, religion and race, not their victims' concern for their homelands.

Public education to dispel myths and stereotyping is seen as vital to reducing the impact of international events on community harmony.



## **Access and Equity**

The third Key Objective was unanimously supported.

Most comment focussed on the Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) program, which generally was strongly supported and its achievements commended.

However, as one submission noted: "Beyond monitoring public sector agency conformity with EAPS, the NSW Government also has an important role in facilitating access and equity within the private sector", and cited businesses, such as Real Estate Agents, servicing immigrants and refugees.

Issues of equity within the private sector, however, do not come within the scope of the EAPS program. Discriminatory practices in private business are covered under other legislation.

It was noted that some progress has been made in addressing issues of equity in the private sector, particularly in specific areas of employment where there is a considerable concentration of immigrant workers.

## The EAPS program

The continuation of EAPS as the driver of access and equity strategies, with enhanced consultative arrangements, is considered to be important to public agency performance and improvement.

As one representative at a consultation meeting stated:

“EAPS should be the driver to ensure that resources are properly and fairly allocated. ‘We don’t have the funds’ is not a valid response. Agencies are required to address planning, allocation and ensuring access. There needs to be more emphasis on funding and planning – with good leadership – to ensure fair provision.”

There was strong support for the introduction of a new definition of EAPS, as suggested in the Green Paper; for a review of the EAPS Standards Framework; and for increased emphasis on and improved consultation and feedback mechanisms.

It was noted that the most effective consultation is that which is undertaken at early stages of the planning process, to gain the greatest level of responsibility and ownership for actions and outcomes.

One submission also drew attention to the necessity in the context of consultation programs for agencies to be culturally sensitive and aware that many cultural groups consult in more informal ways and settings than traditionally practised by Western society.

Agencies indicated considerable support for a review of the Standards Framework and EAPS process, provided that this led to a focus on outcomes rather than the administrative process and reporting mechanisms.

Many of the agencies expressed concerns at any potential increase in demand on time and resources to meet new or additional reporting requirements.

EAPS was viewed as an adequate management and monitoring tool for reporting and planning, particularly at head office level, but some organisations felt that there was often ignorance of EAPS at service provider level in regional offices.

The proposal to publish an updated edition of the *EAPS Resource Handbook for Chief Executive Officers and Senior Managers*, with a companion publication for use by EAPS practitioners, received wide support.

Several agencies expressed the view that release of the new edition would also need to be accompanied by training sessions for senior managers, facilitated by the Community Relations Commission.

Some confusion was introduced by the Green Paper's use of the term "accreditation". However, arising from the confusion was the suggestion that the Community Relations Commission investigate the possibility of integrating EAPS with current formal national and international standards accreditation processes.

Although, as stated above, most submissions commended the EAPS program, advocacy organisations for people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who had either physical or mental disabilities were of the opinion that EAPS had not yet achieved equity or access for the majority of the people that they represented.

## **Regional and rural programs**

The statement on regional and rural programs in the Green Paper was generally supported, although one respondent believed that regional and rural strategies needed to be positioned in the wider contexts of national growth, immigration policy, environmental issues and economic opportunities.

The need for adequate and appropriate programs to be in place was acknowledged in several submissions, especially, as one submission pointed out, "current trends in migration place emphasis on locating immigrants in isolated areas, where access and equitable service delivery may be difficult."

Another response stated that any plans to move refugees to regional centres or to attract immigrants away from the Sydney basin should draw on the experience of recent programs in several regional centres, which demonstrate the need for the State government to work with the rural communities to establish infrastructures and community harmony programs, and employ and train staff to support these programs.

The establishment of Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) by the Community Relations Commission was strongly supported, as respondents stressed the need for the Commission to maintain a strong presence and develop stronger links in the regions.

However, some felt that the role of the RACs needs to be clarified and enhanced, and their profile raised. The RACs were viewed as an important resource for the provision of expertise on cultural diversity to agencies in the regions.

Several respondents strongly recommended that closer ties be established between the RACs and Local Government Areas.

Submissions indicated that the visits made by the Chairperson and Commissioners to the regions are valued, and there was a suggestion that these visits could also provide an important tactical response mechanism to address issues as they arise.

## **Community development**

Although the Community Development Grants Program administered by the Community Relations Commission is well-regarded, a number of submissions raised the difficulty in accessing the program by small and emerging communities.

Several submissions called for an extension of the Grants program, while others argued that “programs need to be more than short-term and tokenistic” and that “the average grant of \$9,000 does not promote sustainability, the development of long-term outcomes or consistency of service provision”.

The NSW Government will allocate more than \$1 million a year to Community Relations Commission grants programs, to encourage the participation of people from culturally diverse communities in all aspects of life in New South Wales.

Applying for grants is seen as requiring special skills. Procedures can sometimes be technical and difficult for organisations that might have a worthy project but do not have the experience and ability to write submissions. Small and emerging community organisations also face the difficulty of finding funds for incorporation and payment of public liability insurance, which are requirements of the grants program.

The impact of public liability insurance on social, cultural and economic activities was identified as a major issue facing community organisations, by several of the organisations that responded to the Green Paper.

Since then, these matters have been addressed by the NSW Government through the introduction of legislation.



## Economic and Cultural Opportunities

### Skills recognition and employment opportunities

Employment is an important determinant of successful settlement for immigrants and refugees. As well as providing income, employment improves self-esteem and gives a sense of purpose.

Although many of those arriving in Australia under the immigration program have their employment qualifications assessed as part of the visa process, respondents to the Green Paper believe systemic barriers, including local recognition of overseas qualifications and experience, still exist for those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The skills recognition approach as it operates in Australia at present is one of assessment of equivalence in qualifications. This approach does not necessarily mean, however, that if a qualification or skill is assessed as equivalent to an Australian qualification or skill, it will be recognised as such, or accepted in the employment market.

Even for those whose qualifications are assessed as equivalent to Australian standards prior to immigration there are barriers. As one submission commented, “the skilled migration program has been favoured for so long, and we can say that Australia’s population is highly skilled. And yet, many of these skilled migrants remain unemployed”.

Several submissions also pointed to the fact that women of linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds in particular face considerable barriers in having their skills recognised, and in accessing employment.

One major barrier for new arrivals and long-term unemployed immigrants, identified by several respondents, is that of “lack of local experience”. Several submissions called for the re-introduction of funded work experience programs, the upgrading of skills through local work experience or training, and programs to assist immigrants understand and adapt to Australian workplace cultures.

Funded workplace experience programs in particular were regarded as a valuable and proven strategy in facilitating access to employment.

Several respondents also argued for some form of incentive to employers to take on and train employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

NSW government initiatives in this area were commended, but “there needs to be more encouragement of employers and migrants in rural areas to participate in the Migrant Career Development Program”.

Several of the submissions referred to the need for promotion of the benefits that can accrue to New South Wales from its culturally diverse workforce, and the need to encourage employers to make more innovative and effective use of the skills that are available to them from workplace diversity.

## Multicultural arts

Promotion of multicultural arts not only enriches our society, but as one submission suggests, may also be important to the mental health of the community. Art helps to assert cultural identity, contributes to the self-esteem of community members, and helps to establish their role in mainstream society.

The arts, including multicultural arts, also offer economic opportunities, particularly if partnered with festivals and tourism packages.

One submission recommended that “the significance of the visual arts not be overlooked. While, as the Green Paper notes, there are opportunities provided for the performing arts, there is little opportunity for visual arts, particularly those from minority communities, to display their work in an established exhibition space”.

It is noted, however, that the Ministry for the Arts supports a range of regional galleries and contemporary arts spaces across New South Wales. These organisations give consideration to the diversity of their local community, and provide opportunities, where possible in their programs, for works to be displayed.

The NSW Government will:

- open the Australian Communities Gallery, a permanent exhibition space at the Powerhouse Museum which will showcase Australia’s vibrant and diverse cultures and communities
- allocate \$55,000 a year to local councils for multicultural street festivals. These festivals help promote community harmony and diversity within local government areas
- tour a major exhibition of Australian Indigenous culture to Athens during the 2004 Olympic Games.

*The multicultural street festival planned for 2003, involved Dubbo, Botany, Hornsby and Manly Councils.*

Some submissions argued for funding of multicultural festivals over a three-to-five year period, to allow the local organisation to develop ongoing commitment from sponsors and recognition from the general community.

As one submission put it: “Whilst multicultural celebrations and awards are valid contributions towards [the fourth Key Objective], emphasis should also be placed on activities which encourage systemic change, rather than ‘one-off’ type events and awards which may do little towards permanently changing the way we do things to encourage cultural diversity.”

## Tourism

New South Wales is an exciting, unique and cosmopolitan tourist destination. Responses to the Green Paper were of the view that tourism policy should embrace the concept of cultural diversity whole-heartedly, promoting not just the sights and the food, but our diverse people as well.

The possibility for the regions to benefit economically and culturally was also identified: “Tourism promotion should focus on the positive aspects of cultural diversity and highlight major cultures represented in the regions.”

The NSW Government will:

- designate representatives from the Community Relations Commission to the *Tourism Industry Forum* to participate and provide advice
- build on Tourism NSW’s successful multicultural campaigns to encourage people of migrant backgrounds to holiday in NSW. Cantonese, Indian and other Asian languages will be a priority, with an Arabic campaign also planned.

*The Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation has been liaising with the Community Relations Commission to select representatives for the Tourism Industry Forum.*

## Trade and business

The multicultural community of New South Wales delivers many benefits which contribute to the economic wellbeing of the State. The reservoir of diverse languages plus the empathy that stems from its culturally diverse society places New South Wales in a prominent position to capitalise on economic opportunities. In an increasingly competitive global market economy, New South Wales needs to tap into its cultural assets and use these to advantage.

The promotion of cultural diversity as one of New South Wales' major assets was supported by respondents, one submission declaring that in today's global economy, it is in the interests of government, business and industry leaders, education and training institutions and others to recognise, value and employ the multicultural and multilingual knowledge, skills, experience and other assets of the people of New South Wales.

Other submissions called for assistance for small business owners to comply with state regulations and requirements.

The NSW Government will:

- develop a series of initiatives to coordinate NSW interests concerning the 2008 Beijing Games
- enlist bilateral peak councils and chambers of commerce to promote international trade and participation in the NSW Government's program of trade missions and market visits
- foster networking opportunities to assist the Asian business community establish and reinforce relationships with government and other businesses
- continue to operate a network of specialist export advisers to develop, maintain and expand export markets.

*The Sydney-Beijing Secretariat provides NSW Government business and expertise in Beijing; 11 NSW companies were among the final tenders for major construction projects for Beijing.*

*Seven Export Advisers have been based in regional locations in NSW; the NSW-Asia Business Advisory Council has been reappointed.*



## Local Government

As noted in the Green Paper, an increasing number of services are being delivered at the local government level, and it is important that such services are appropriate to the culturally diverse community to which they are directed.

The Green Paper also noted that the expanded role of the Community Relations Commission (through the new definition of “public authority” in the *Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000*) now encompasses local councils and shires, and stated that the Commission was considering strategies to have councils and shires report on their activities under the EAPS program.

Of the responses to the Green Paper, some 17 per cent were from local, city or shire councils and other local government organisations. These recorded strong support in principle to the Plan of Action 2012 in general and the Key Objectives in particular.

However, it was pointed out that councils fulfil the requirement to address the Principles of Multiculturalism through the Social/Community Planning and Reporting Guidelines and Management Planning provisions of the Local Government Act 1993 (as amended) and Regulations.

NSW local councils’ social/community frameworks are based on the NSW Government’s broader social justice framework, which includes seven target groups – one of which is people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

There was general and strong support for the Community Relations Commission to work in close collaboration with the Department of Local Government to ensure that future Social/Community Plans meet the requirements of the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 and the Local Government (General) Regulations 1999, and that provision of services against the principles of multiculturalism is monitored.

As one community organisation put it, “Local councils are leaders within their communities, possess expertise in working closely with their community, and often are the point of access to Government by community members. The development of stronger working relations between the Community Relations Commission and local councils is supported”.



## Language Services

The Green Paper identified the provision of quality language services as crucial to effective service delivery in a culturally diverse society, and stated as fundamental principles that:

- everyone is entitled to a qualified interpreter if they request such assistance in dealing with government agencies
- everyone should have access to professional translation services.

While there was strong in principle support for the provision of language services, submissions drew attention to an array of practical issues, including:

- the need for accurate data on the need for and use of language services
- the need to ensure ongoing levels of consistency
- the cost of provision.

Practical problems faced within the health system, particularly in arranging interpreter appointments for specialists or medical tests, were highlighted by several of the Health Areas, while the NSW Ambulance Service pointed out that in the context of emergency health care, it may not be feasible to provide language services in all situations in a time-critical manner.

Access difficulties for people in rural and remote situations were also highlighted: “I know that the Interpreter Service is only a phone call away. But service providers in the country are either not aware that they exist, how to access them or for what reasons they can be used. Cost also becomes a factor as this is not built into funding as it is in metropolitan areas”.

The proposed development of video-conferencing facilities, web-based and outreach services were supported as good initiatives. However, as there remains a significant proportion of the regional population with insufficient technological skills, the provision of web-based information and services should not become an excuse for not providing services and information by other appropriate means.

The NSW Government will:

- continue to fund the Community Relations Commission to make its interpreter service available 24 hours a day, seven days per week at the cost of a local call
- enable culturally diverse communities to request translations from the Community Relations Commission over the Internet, allowing for faster and more efficient delivery of service, funded through *connect.nsw*

- increase the provision of interpreter services to NSW Police to assist with investigations, victim support, community safety, community harmony, anti-terrorism and police operational efficiency
- support migrant communities to set up their own websites free of charge, enabling them to interact with other communities over the Internet. The project will be implemented by the Community Relations Commission and funded through the Government's IT strategy, *connect.nsw*.

*These initiatives are being implemented.*

*The establishment of migrant community websites will be trialed with the Spanish-speaking community.*



## Women

Several submissions drew attention to the particular needs of women from language backgrounds other than English, and especially those who are socially isolated.

The impact of immigration and settlement, policy application and provision of services is often experienced differently by women from men.

The opportunities for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to access services, participate in public life and enter the workforce, are often constrained by such factors as geographic isolation and access to public transport; child-rearing and other family care responsibilities; post-school education; and English language proficiency.

There are therefore particular needs in the areas of child-care provision (in association with English language tuition and employment training provision), health care provision, and skills recognition.

Provision of appropriate assistance for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in establishing and maintaining business enterprises is also vital in the context of economic development.

The NSW Government is also taking specific measures to achieve a fair, safe and ethical working environment for clothing outworkers and a viable, competitive clothing industry.

The NSW Government will implement further measures to protect clothing outworkers from exploitation.

*The NSW Government has committed \$4 million over three years (2001-2004) to the Behind the Label Strategy. A further \$600,000 has been committed for education programs directed at assisting outworkers with vocational and English language education.*

## The Unity in Adversity Affirmation

On 15 November 2001, following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and in response to local communal tensions and incidents which followed that event, the Premier hosted a multi-faith gathering, Unity in Adversity, at Government House in Sydney.

The gathering, which included the Leader of the NSW Liberal Party, the Leader of the NSW National Party, the Chairperson of the Community Relations Commission, community leaders, and representatives from the diplomatic and consular corps, brought together community and religious groups to condemn terrorism and express commitment to the goals of tolerance and harmonious relations in New South Wales which was expressed in an affirmation signed by participants.

### **UNITY IN ADVERSITY – AFFIRMATION**

We the leaders of New South Wales' many religious faiths, leaders of the major political parties in New South Wales Parliament and representatives of the Consular Corps in New South Wales join at this time of adversity in affirming and celebrating the spirit of tolerance and goodwill at the heart of Australian society.

We acknowledge the commitment of the New South Wales Parliament to the diversity of the Australian community. We condemn all acts of terrorism. We embrace in our hearts the victims and families of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, the long-suffering of the Afghan people, those of Afghan descent who live among us and all victims of terror and oppression in this time of conflict.

In the name of our respective faiths and in accordance with the principles we each uphold, we dedicate ourselves to act generously, humanely, and with compassion in fulfilling our proud citizenship of Australia and our role as concerned members of the world community.

*This Affirmation was signed by the Premier Bob Carr and religious leaders including Archbishop George Pell, Archbishop Peter Jensen, Protopresbyter Steven Scoutas, His Eminence Tadjedine Al Hilaly, Most Venerable Thich Phuoc Hue and Rabbi Raymond Apple at the Unity in Adversity Assembly on 15 November 2001 at Government House.*

The affirmation is on permanent display at Parliament House