

statement of affairs

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1. STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

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

Establishment

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

The Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism provides for the appointment by the Governor of up to eleven Commissioners. As at 30 June 2006, the Commission consists of one full-time Chairperson, one part-time Deputy Chairperson, and six part-time commissioners. Commissioners are appointed on the basis of their qualifications, experience, and knowledge and sensitivity to multicultural issues.

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

Organisation

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

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

For the financial year ended 30 June 2006 the Commission's total expenses were \$15.1 million. This was funded by a recurrent allocation of \$11.9 million, and user charges and other revenue of \$4.3 million. The Commission's operating expenses comprise \$10.5 million for employee related costs and \$2.4 million in other operating expenses.

In the 2005-2006 financial year the Commission had a budget of \$1.5 million for grants.

Advisory committees and sub-committees

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

Regional Advisory Councils

The Commission operates ten regional advisory councils to enable enhanced community input into policy formulation and community comment on prevailing regional issues. They are convened by part-time commissioners and their recommendations are brought to the attention of the Commission.

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

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

○ Community Relations Service

The Community Relations Service promotes the development and implementation of community relations policies across the spectrum of government activities, as outlined in the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000.

The Community Relations Service develops model projects with communities and partnership organisations based on the goals of the Act.

○ Government Relations

Through the EAPS program, the Government Relations unit implements the Commission's legislated responsibility to assist and assess public authorities in observing the principles of multiculturalism. It also prepares policy advice and correspondence as required, and briefings and speech notes for the Premier or his representative when attending community events.

○ Regional Relations Service

This division coordinates and manages ten regional advisory councils which cover the Albury, Central West, Griffith, Hornsby-Central Coast, Hunter, Illawarra, Macarthur-Liverpool, Nepean-Blacktown, New England and Northern regions.

The councils assist the Commission in its interaction with people representing the multicultural community in rural and regional areas. The councils advise on matters affecting their specific regions of the state. Membership of the councils comprises relevant local and regional government agencies and individuals to reflect the diversity of each region.

Regional Services develops strategies and works in partnership with local community organisations and government agencies to address identified regional issues. This division keeps the Commission informed of any regional developments.

○ Information and Management Services

Information and Management Services manages and controls the linkages between the Commission's knowledge base, technological system and infrastructure and organisational performance. It undertakes strategic policy development and planning, promotes and innovative initiatives and implements performance management and reporting. Its functions and responsibilities include:

- corporate and strategic planning
- performance management, training, and compliance reporting
- quality management
- information, records, data and knowledge management
- information technology and systems
- program management and administration (funding and language testing)
- project management
- electronic business
- secretariat support

○ Language Services

Language Services provides comprehensive interpreter and translation services throughout NSW in over 77 languages and dialects in order to facilitate equal participation and access to government services within a multicultural NSW.

The Community Relations Commission employs over 500 casual interpreters/translators. Services are available to all Government departments, agencies, private and commercial organisations, community groups and individuals. The services are primarily on a user-pays basis, with exemption granted on a needs basis.

○ Financial and Corporate Services

The Financial and Corporate Services Division comprises of the finance, human resources and accommodation units.

Responsibilities of the Division include

- budgeting and control
- financial management and reporting
- risk management and the coordination of internal audit
- procurement
- asset management including insurance
- accommodation and security functions of the Commission
- human resources and industrial relations services.

Planning mechanisms

The following planning mechanisms are in place in respect of the Commission:

- (1) Meetings of the Commission are convened monthly (or more often if required) to determine policy and priorities.
- (2) The meetings of the Commission's senior executive staff play a major role in planning the activities of the Commission. These meetings are held weekly and provide a venue for the planning of day to day activities of the Commission.
- (3) The 2002-2006 Corporate Plan identifies the goals of the Commission and outlines strategies to ensure the achievement of the corporate objectives and the relevance to the Government's community relations objectives articulated in the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 and the White Paper *Cultural Harmony, The Next Decade 2002-2012*.
- (4) The White Paper *Cultural Harmony, The Next Decade 2002 - 2012* contains the Community Relations Plan of Action 2012. The White Paper sets the directions for community relations and the implementation of the Principles of Multiculturalism by NSW Government agencies until 2012.

The Plan of Action 2012 contains the four Key Objectives which flow from the principles of multiculturalism and articulate the Government's aims and the results expected from Government agencies. The key objectives are:

- leadership
- community harmony
- access and equity within a framework of social justice obligations
- economic and cultural opportunities.

To ensure the timely and efficient implementation of the Community Relations Action Plan 2012, the Government requires key agencies to provide Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statements (EAPS) to the Commission. Each EAPS will indicate the recent achievements of the agency in implementing the four key objectives, as well as foreshadowing the initiatives that will be undertaken.

To ensure that EAPS are publicly accessible and fully implemented into the core business of all government agencies, the Government requires that all agencies, including statutory authorities, provide in their annual reports a statement of EAPS achievements and foreshadowed activities for the following year. Furthermore, the Commission is required to annually produce a report to Parliament on the state of community relations in New South Wales.

- (5) An annual community relations symposium is the major consultative event on the NSW multicultural calendar. The Commission organises each symposia as part of its legislative responsibility to consult systematically and widely with the people of New South Wales. The symposia invite participation from key community organisations in rural, regional and metropolitan NSW.

Criteria for measuring the Commission's performance

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

In the interests of customer service, Language Services monitors standards for translation and interpreting by meeting with clients and networking closely with major clients. This provides a clear indication of customer needs and satisfaction with services.

The Corporate Plan outlines a series of goals and strategies of the Commission for the period from 2002 to 2006.

The annual report provides feedback on the Commission's performance using pre-determined performance indicators.

2. EFFECT OF THE COMMISSION'S FUNCTIONS ON MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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

- The provision of interpreter and translation services has immediate benefit for non-English speaking clients of the Commission both in personal matters and in their dealings with government departments.
- Community relations policies and programs in the NSW public sector are based on the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000. The Act incorporates four principles of multiculturalism and makes the chief executive officers of public sector agencies responsible for the implementation of the principles.
- The Act seeks to ensure that the public sector is responsive to the needs of, and the opportunities created by, a culturally diverse society.
- The Commission's community relations programs are an avenue by which the needs of community groups may be brought to the attention of the government.
- The Commission accepts submissions on matters relating to community relations, and is prepared to examine them in the context of Government policy.

3. ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN POLICY FORMULATION

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

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

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

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPES OF DOCUMENTS HELD BY THE COMMISSION

- A (i) The following documents are held at the Commission or in its website and are available free of charge.
- Policy documents and guidelines on the Commission's programs
 - Green Paper, *Cultural Harmony, The Next Decade 2002-2012*
 - Corporate Plan 2002-2006
 - Annual reports
 - Guidelines for exemptions from payment for language services
 - Guidelines for the operation of Regional Advisory Councils
 - Policy documents and management plan on the protection of privacy and personal information.
 - The White Paper *Cultural Harmony, The Next Decade 2002 - 2012*
 - *The People of NSW Statistics from the 2001 Census*
 - *Community Relations Report 2005*

Commission reports and publications on a range of matters such as religious development in NSW, Keynote Address by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AO, Governor of New South Wales, and others are available.

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

- B The following documents are not normally available for public inspection:
- departmental files and records which include correspondence and file notes in respect of all of the Commission's operations
 - agendas and minutes of Commission meetings
 - departmental files in respect of staff recruitment, staff training, and staff members' personal files and information
 - departmental files containing information on grant and webhosting applications, and assessments of applications
 - departmental files containing commercial transactions

- background notes on ethnic community groups
- documentation on requests for translations
- documentation on interpreting assignments.

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

5. ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS, PROCEDURES AND POINTS OF CONTACT

The documents listed under part A are available from the Commission's Quality and Information Officer, who is located at level eight, 175-183 Castlereagh Street, Sydney. The telephone number is (02) 8255 6773, Monday to Friday on usual working days between 9.30 am and 4.30 pm.

If access to documents listed under part B is required in the context of the Freedom of Information legislation, an approach should be made to the Freedom of Information Officer at level 8, 175-183 Castlereagh Street, Sydney. The telephone number is (02) 8255 6773 during the same hours of business on weekdays.

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

Nature of application	Application fee	Processing charge
Access to records by natural persons about their personal affairs.	\$30 ¹	\$30 per hour after first twenty hours ¹
All other requests	\$30 ¹	\$30 per hour *
Internal review ³	\$40 ^{1, 2}	Nil
Amendment of records	Nil ²	Nil

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

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

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

Access to information

During the reporting year one request was received for access to information under the Freedom of Information Act 1989. This is one more than for the 2004-2005 year.

In the past year, FOI procedures had no significant impact on administration. No major issues or problems arose and there were no inquiries to the Ombudsman or appeals to the District Court.