

ETHNOS

12

July/Aug
1981

Newsletter for Ethnic Liaison Officers, N.S.W.
Published by the Ethnic Affairs Commission

SEMINAR HELD TO DISCUSS FAMILY LAW AND IMMIGRANTS

The Ethnic Affairs Commission joined forces with the Family Court of Australia during July to hold a seminar on Family Law.

The Family Law Act 1975, because of its relative newness is not understood by many Australians. People of non-English speaking background may have even greater difficulty. The Court and the Commission have ample evidence of the need to improve access to information on the issue of family laws in Australia for the newly arrived.

This was the first seminar of its kind in N.S.W. which has brought together the Chief Judge, a registrar and counsellors of the Family Court, and people working with the ethnic communities in information and counselling roles, and Ethnic Affairs Commissioners and staff.

The purpose of the seminar was to examine ways in which the aims of the Family Law Act could be most effectively communicated to people of non-English speaking background.

Among the issues discussed on the day were:

- * ways in which the Family Court and ethnic workers could co-operate to improve "separation counselling" services to immigrants;
- * social and legal changes which have been evolving here in recent years, such as custody of children, disposal of common property, and other aspects of Australia's family law system.



A working party has now been established to explore suggestions made during the discussions and its members will decide jointly on how some of the needs of the ethnic communities can be met. The working party consists of representatives of ethnic organisations, counsellors of the Family Court, and staff of the Commission.

Further details about decisions taken at the seminar in relation to on-going research and dialogue on this important topic will be published in the next issue of Ethnos.

Meanwhile, for further information, please contact the Project Officer - Women's Issues at the Commission on 231 7285.

PARAMEDICAL COURSES AT CUMBERLAND COLLEGE
WILL ASSIST IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

A recent decision made by Cumberland College of Health Sciences concerning student intakes, aims at improving paramedical services to immigrants of non-English speaking background.

In future, up to 5% of the places at the College will be available for H.S.C. students who are bilingual.

The initiative is aimed at increasing the number of professionals with linguistic skills and cultural traits which make them more suited to assisting clients of non-English speaking background.

The scheme, which is the first of its kind in N.S.W., was announced by the Premier, Mr. Wran.

"It has been one of the less desirable realities of immigration that entire immigrant communities have suffered because very few professionals of the same language and culture have emigrated with them," Commission Chairman, Dr. Totaro says.

"The Cumberland College of Health Sciences and the Ethnic Affairs Commission have developed this special admission scheme to give an incentive to people of appropriate bilingual background to enter the health profession. I trust the situation will change now," he says.

Courses for which special admission conditions apply include physiotherapy, occupational therapy, nursing, speech therapy and medical record administration.

Students wishing to apply for special entry should make the normal application to the Universities and Colleges Admission Centre before October 1, 1981.

They should also make application to the Commission on forms available from officers of the Commission and the College.

For further information please contact Tony Dolk on 231 7289.

MIGRANTS AND THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT

A Seminar held in Sydney recently to determine amendment to the N.S.W. Mental Health Act 1958, has recommended sweeping reforms to the Act.

The Seminar was organised by the Committee on Mental Health Advocacy (COMHA) and one of the central issues discussed was Magisterial Hearings. At such hearings mental patients whom psychiatrists believe are in need of confinement for their care, are committed.

Other issues discussed included compulsory treatment, the mentally handicapped, migrants and the Mental Health Act, and alternatives to hospitalisation.

The workshop on Migrants and the Mental Health Act focussed on the special needs of patients of non-English speaking background.

A number of important resolutions were adopted by the Seminar including:

- * The assessment of all patients of non-English speaking background in the presence of an interpreter within a period of 72 hours after admission.
- * The provision of an officially accredited interpreter at Magisterial Hearings including patients who do not have an adequate knowledge of the English language.
- * Information on the rights of a patient under the Mental Health Act to be made available in the various community languages.

The resolutions will be presented to all Members of Parliament so that they are fully informed of the needs of the people affected when the Act finally passes from Cabinet to the Parliamentary table.

Tony Dolk, Project Officer, Health, represented the Commission at the Seminar. Full proceedings of the Seminar will be available in the near future.

For further information contact Tony Dolk on 231 7289.

STAFF MOVEMENTS

The Ethnic Affairs Commission, like a number of other N.S.W. Government bodies, has been affected by the 'freezing' of staff positions.

We were feeling particularly chilly as the freeze struck at a point when there was an unusually large fluctuation in the staffing situation.

However, we were able to fill one extremely important position, that of Project/Planning Officer - Education. Lesley Lynch, formerly of Sydney University, has taken up the position.

Lesley has an excellent grasp of the educational issues affecting children from families of non-English speaking background, as a result of her teaching experience at Dapto (Wollongong), followed by participation in courses on migrants' experiences in Australia for Sydney University. She is now working at full steam on the controversial issue of the Higher School Certificate exams on community languages. More on this in the next issue.

For all enquiries relating to educational issues, please contact Lesley Lynch at the Commission on (02) 231 7282.

The Commission's Liaison Section is the scene of more changes this month, with Abdallah Mograby being appointed Liaison Officer, Hurstville office.

Abdallah, who is already well known to the Arabic-speaking community, has devoted a great deal of his time to researching migration issues. He will be a valuable addition to our Hurstville staff.

Alex Burns, Liaison Officer with our Newcastle office has now returned from extended leave. In his absence, Ms. Olga Corrigan did an excellent job of assisting the ethnic communities of the Newcastle area.

Fadel Benhima, who usually works as a Liaison Officer at our Wollongong office, is currently acting as Senior Liaison Officer in our City office.



Co-ordinator of the Commission's Interpreting and Translating Service, Lawrence Goodstone, presents Zuzanna with a farewell gift from Commission staff as the Chairman, Paolo Totaro, looks on.

Ms. Zuzanna Zarebska, who has acted as an interpreter and information officer to the many Polish people coming to the Commission in recent months, retired on 18th June, 1981. But Zuzanna was back with us the following day, helping her Polish compatriots on a voluntary basis.

Zuzanna, who worked in the Translation Unit of the Commission, after joining the staff in 1977, is held in very high esteem at the Commission and she is equally valued by the Polish community.

Although it is over a month since Zuzanna's retirement, she can be found at the Commission most afternoons with another voluntary worker, her friend Nina Porebska.

Together, they help the Commission in its assistance to people of Polish background.

For further information, please contact Ms. Porebska between 2.00 and 4.00 p.m. each week day on 231 7433.

COMMISSION HELPS WITH EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The Commission's former Senior Liaison Officer, Luba McMaugh, recently joined the Office of the Counsellor for Equal Opportunity as a Conciliation Officer.

But Luba is not entirely lost to the Commission. She will be visiting Newcastle and Wollongong on a regular basis in her new job.

And following consultation between the Counsellor, Carmel Niland, and the Commission, it has been decided that the most appropriate place for Luba to work from is the Commission's offices in those two cities.

For further information, please contact Luba McMaugh on (02) 232 2311.

WOMEN

The South Sydney Women's Centre has come up with an interesting class format for immigrant women wanting to improve their English skills.

Every Thursday from 11.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m., a group gathers to converse in English under the supervision of a teacher. This is not a class as such and activities vary from following an English-language recipe to shopping in stores where only English is spoken.

The emphasis is practical and realistic, the approach is relaxed and informal.

For further information about these Thursday get-togethers, contact the Centre on (02) 699 7494.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COURSES ON AGAIN

The Equal Opportunity Courses to help people of ethnic background obtain better job opportunities and job mobility, is to be run again by T.A.F.E. colleges all over Sydney.

Selection tests were held on 6th July, and, as with the pilot courses last year, the response was immediate and significant. This time nearly 250 people applied to join the courses, and an intake of 220 has been approved.

The courses, to improve job skills such as letter-writing, memo-writing, writing of reports and ministerial statements, interview skills, and other vocational training, were designed by the Commission, the Public Service Board, and T.A.F.E. The courses are part of the State Government's commitment to equal employment opportunity.

For further information, please contact the School of General Studies, telephone (02) 217 3468.

AN ESSAY COMPETITION WITH A DIFFERENCE

The Ethnic Affairs Commission is assisting in the organisation of an unusual writing competition which aims to select six young Australians to participate in a series of multicultural T.V. documentary programmes.

It is a competition for teenagers of immigrant background to write an original description of what they imagine their parents' country of origin to be like today.

Those eligible are students at present enrolled in Years 9, 10, and 11 of N.S.W. and Victorian high schools, who were either born in Australia, or who came here at an early age and have never re-visited their country of origin. Students' entries must be submitted to the school principal by 28th August, 1981.

Six winners will be chosen, and Channel 0/28 will fly with each of the winners back to their parents' country of origin and film the students' reaction to it as part of a series of T.V. programmes.

Singapore Airlines will fly the children, with chaperones, to and from their destinations.

For further information please contact Angela Bollard on 231 7285.

N.S.W. GOVERNMENT'S ETHNIC GRANTS PUT TO GOOD USE

1. The N.S.W. Labor Council was granted \$5,000 this year, through the Ethnic Affairs Commission, to produce audio-visual material for immigrant workers.

The main idea is to produce audio tapes and slides about workers' compensation, participation in union life, English classes and so on, which can be shown easily in factories and other on-the-job locations.

The Council already receives funding for an Ethnic Affairs Unit which, with the additional money, will produce the audio-visual material.

Anyone with further suggestions of topics for productions should contact Carlos Gonzalez at the Council on (02) 264 1691.

2. The Woolgoolga High School in northern N.S.W., which has a large number of Indian students, recently applied for funding of \$300 from the Commission to purchase a ram for its Suffolk sheep stud.

The Stud, developed as a school project which would give both Australia-born and Indian children the opportunity to work together on a rural project as a co-operative work experience exercise, has now purchased the ram.

The project also involves the study of genetics, to see the effects of inter-variety breeding. The first lambs are due now.

3. Toe Truck Theatre, which has received assistance from the Commission in the past for its excellent productions dealing with multicultural themes, has a new production under way.

Called KASPAJACK, it is a play about migrants and language development and is particularly suitable for infants, but it has also been performed for various adult groups at migrant centres, teaching colleges etc.

During third term, Toe Truck will run a series of performances of the play with workshops and follow-up visits in small groups of Central Metropolitan Schools.

I'VE GOT A NAME - about a boy who migrated to Australia in the 1930's after living as a refugee in Europe, is another Toe Truck production. This one is aimed at Upper Primary and Lower Secondary schools.

For further information about Toe Truck Theatre productions, contact Lyn Tuit on (02) 692 0711.

4. The traditional weaving skills of a group of Sardinian Italian women living in the Ashford district near Armidale in northern N.S.W., are the basis of a new co-operative venture being supported by grants from the Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Australia Council.

About twenty extended families live in the district and they have retained many aspects of their cultural heritage, and weaving is an important part of this heritage.

The establishment of a craft co-operative centre has also brought the women out of their isolation on farms, back into the more traditional village-style environment.

A great deal of assistance in the development of this project was given by Dr. Helen Andreoni, of Armidale College of Advanced Education Centre for Multicultural Studies and the Ashford Central School.

The Commission's grant was spent on looms used for weaving the Sardinian rugs, bedspreads and so on which will later be on sale in N.S.W.

For further information, please contact Helen Andreoni on (067) 72 1244.

WE ARE NO LONGER ALONE

The N.S.W. Ethnic Affairs Commission was the first of its kind in Australia, which is appropriate for the 'Premier' State. But now we have been joined by South Australia which has opened the doors of its own Ethnic Affairs Commission.

The new Commission set up by South Australia's Liberal Government, is under the Chairmanship of Latvian-Australian, Bruno Krumins. He will be assisted by seven part-time commissioners, responsible for areas including industrial relations, law, health and women's affairs.

The Act constituting the South Australian Commission has been drafted very much along the lines of the N.S.W. one.

Last week both Bruno and one of his senior staff members, Alex Gardini, visited our Sydney offices to study the operations of the Commission.

The South Australian Ethnic Affairs Commission is located at 25 Peel Street, Adelaide, telephone (08) 51 6767.

Meanwhile in Victoria, the June Conference of the Victorian Branch of the A.L.P. passed a resolution that the creation of a Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission become policy in that State.

And we also hear there are changes afoot in Queensland in the field of ethnic affairs. More details of this as they come to us.

DOCTORS & THEIR OVERSEAS-GAINED QUALIFICATIONS

The Ethnic Affairs Commission's Overseas Qualifications Unit has been involved in assisting a group of overseas-trained doctors in their attempts to gain recognition of their qualifications in Australia.

There are some interesting statistics which tell the story of this group.

Since 1979, a total of 447 candidates have attempted the examination prepared by the official accrediting body, the Australian Medical Examining Council. Of these, only 75 have qualified for the Council's final certificate. This means that the average pass rate for exams is 17%.

The Commission's Overseas Qualifications Counselling Unit made a number of recommendations to the Council in 1980 regarding this situation.

They included the suggestion that the Council abolish its rule which binds candidates to three attempts in the examinations; and another, that candidates who have already passed part of the examination at one session, re-sit only those sections of the examination in which they were unsuccessful. So far none of the Commission's recommendations have been implemented.

The Unit works closely with the Commonwealth Committee on Overseas Professional Qualifications which is one of the accrediting bodies.

TRADESPEOPLE & THEIR OVERSEAS-GAINED QUALIFICATIONS

In 1979/80 some 81,271 immigrants were allowed to come to Australia. Of those, 12,753 (15%) were skilled tradespeople. Of the total arrivals only 6,289 (7.7%) were selected with NUMAS between April 1979 and December 1980.

The vast proportion of skilled tradespeople were selected from: United Kingdom - 3,640; New Zealand - 3,815; South Africa - 536; Germany - 509; Argentina - 289; Austria - 243; Yugoslavia - 243. There were only 175 skilled tradespeople recruited from Italy; 54 from Greece, and 12 from Lebanon.

Since the Commission's Overseas Qualifications Unit opened two years ago, over 1,600 overseas-trained immigrants have come to the Unit for information and advice.

The Unit does not grant recognition of qualifications, but tells people how to go about gaining recognition, informs them of bridging courses for various trades and professions, and keeps statistics to enable it to make recommendations relating to the streamlining of recognition of qualifications.

For further information, please contact Nabil Kazemi on 231 7387.

EDUCATION

The Milperra College of Advanced Education has developed an unusual new approach to multiculturalism and industry with its programme of short courses which are run at factory sites.

The courses in cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication have already been successfully trialed at C.S.R. Ltd.'s Bradford Insulation plant over a six-week period.

Course content is designed to assist industry in developing more effective communication across cultural boundaries.

It is also hoped that the courses will result in workers and management of diverse cultural and ethnic background reaching a greater degree of understanding and tolerance.

The College is now negotiating with other companies who have expressed interest in the courses.

For further information contact Milperra College on (02) 772 9200.

HEALTH CARE INTERPRETERS SERVICE EXTENDED

Four full-time interpreters have been appointed to the Health Commission's Northern Metropolitan Region.

The Region includes the Lower North Shore Area up to Hornsby and Gosford and over to Ryde and the Manly/Warringah peninsula.

Virginia Barnett who speaks Armenian and French, Zdenka Djogich (Serbian, Croatian, German), Giuseppe Murgida (Italian, Spanish), and Yvonne Tanous who speaks Arabic in all dialects, are all based at Lanceley Cottage, 2 Herbert Street, St. Leonards.

Interpreters can be requested by doctors, nurses, physiotherapists (or other health care personnel) or by the patient themselves.

For further information please contact Petrina Slaytor on (02) 438 3159.