

SECTION 2: CONTEXT FOR THE REVIEW

Any review of ethnic affairs needs to be located in a context. This includes the demographic trends that are influencing the New South Wales population, the key issues of concern to ethnic community groups and individuals, and the roles of the non-government sector and Government - Commonwealth, State and Local – which provide the policy framework within which a NSW direction on ethnic affairs policy can be shaped. This Section describes each of these environmental factors in order.

2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT¹

The demography and characteristics of the NSW population are a critical factor in developing Government policy and programs. What follows is a brief summary of these characteristics pertinent to our culturally diverse population, with a more detailed description of the State's population trends included as an Appendix to this Report.

Depending upon the source of the data and the characteristics being addressed, people of non-English speaking background may be identified by one or more factors, including place of birth, birthplace of parents, language spoken at home, English language proficiency, religion or culture.

This Report has adopted an inclusive approach to defining members of ethnic communities, which includes each and all of the above factors.

New South Wales has the highest proportion of any state in Australia of overseas born, as well as the highest overall number of people born overseas. At the time of the 1981 Census 20 per cent of the NSW population were born overseas. By 1991, this figure had increased to nearly 23 per cent of the total population.

Currently more than 41 per cent of the NSW population is either overseas born, or has one or both parents born overseas (see Figure 1).

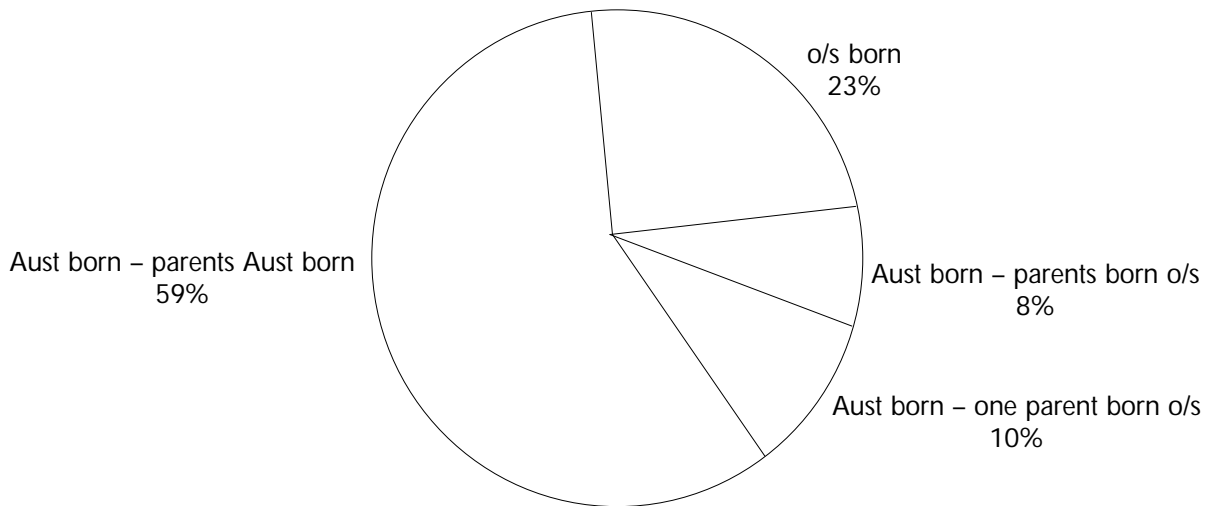
The NSW population is also linguistically diverse. In 1991 over 16 per cent of the NSW population aged 5 and over spoke a language other than English at home. The fastest growing languages, among those who speak a language other than English in their home, include Chinese, Arabic, Filipino and Vietnamese. The languages that have remained static or decreased in use include Dutch, French, German and Hungarian. Figure 2 illustrates the percentage change in languages spoken between the 1986 and 1991 Censuses. This trend is expected to continue in the 1996 Census.

¹ Most of the statistical information contained in this Report is derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1991 Census of Population and Housing. The birthplace categories used by the ABS reflects the classification system of that time (for example Yugoslavia) and does not reflect the current situation.

The NSW Government acknowledges that concerns exist regarding the use of the general term 'Yugoslavia'. However the Government is not in a position to alter data gathered in 1991. It is understood that when data becomes available from the 1996 Census, it will reflect current country and language classifications.

Figure 1: Proportion of NSW population born overseas, or with parents born overseas, 1991

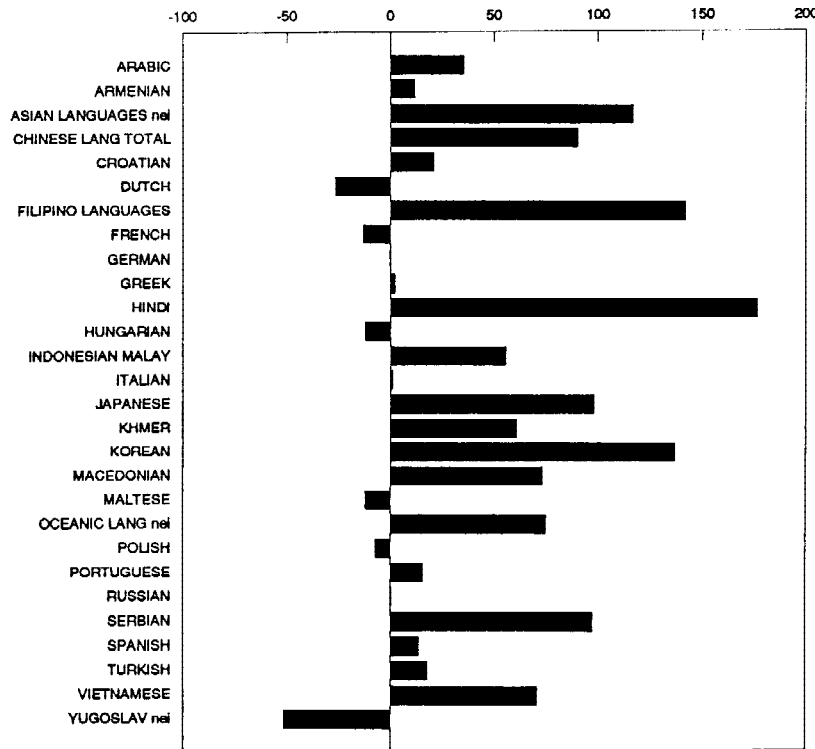
Source: *The People of New South Wales*, Ethnic Affairs Commission, 1994



Over the last ten years NSW has experienced considerable change in patterns of religious adherence. In proportional terms the trend has been for either moderate growth or decline in some of the older, established Christian denominations contrasted with strong to very strong growth among the more recently established denominations and religions in NSW.

Between the 1986 and 1991 Censuses, Catholics had the largest increase in number of adherents, increasing by over 160,000 to nearly 1,700,000 and remaining the largest denomination in NSW (29% of the population). The next largest increase was for Anglicans who in 1991 made up 27% of the population.

The fastest growing religions were the Oriental Christian faiths, increasing by 122% between 1986 and 1991 to 16,700 adherents, Hinduism (116% increase to over 22,000) Buddhism (67% increase to nearly 60,000) Pentacostalism (55% increase to over 37,000) and Islam (35% increase to nearly 78,000). Muslims remain the largest non-Christian religious group in NSW.

Figure 2: Languages Spoken: Percentage Change 1986-1991Source: *The People of New South Wales*, Ethnic Affairs Commission, 1994

It is difficult to predict accurately the trends in immigration over the next ten years, since Commonwealth policy in this area is subject to a complex set of political, social and economic factors and migration trends often reflect international events which cannot be foreseen. Nonetheless based on current policies and trends, it is expected that New South Wales will see the following effects:

- ◆ Significant migration can be expected to continue from Asia. While there is likely to be a slowing in migration from Vietnam and Hong Kong, this is likely to be offset by an increase in migration from other parts of Asia including Korea, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, India and the Philippines.
- ◆ A significant proportion of overseas migration to NSW will continue to come from English speaking nations, in particular from Great Britain (mainly from England and Scotland) as well as from New Zealand.
- ◆ New and emerging communities will continue to grow over the next five years, including recent arrivals from Eastern Europe (who do not necessarily identify with established Eastern European communities), new settlers from Africa and from the Pacific Islands.
- ◆ Decreases are expected in numbers of overseas born members of the more established migrant communities from Greece, Italy, Germany and other European countries whose rate of new arrivals has in some cases virtually stopped.

The picture of culturally diverse New South Wales in ten years time is thus likely to resemble the one that exists presently but with a slightly higher proportion of the population being overseas born in a non-English speaking country and speaking a language other than English.

Increasing opportunities for language maintenance should lead to a higher percentage of the population being fluent in at least two languages. Of those people born in a non-English speaking country, we may expect to find a larger proportion coming from the Asia-Pacific than is currently the case.

People of non-English speaking background are not evenly dispersed across the state. Most people born overseas in non-English speaking countries choose to settle in Sydney, Wollongong or Newcastle. Most rural areas have relatively small numbers of people of non-English speaking background.

The Local Government Areas (LGAs) with high proportions of people born overseas in non-English speaking countries or speaking languages other than English are in the Sydney metropolitan area. The LGAs with the highest proportion of speakers of languages other than English are Fairfield, Canterbury, Auburn, Marrickville, Botany, Ashfield, Burwood, Rockdale, Strathfield, Concord, Bankstown and Liverpool.

The non-metropolitan LGAs with the largest proportions of overseas born in non-English speaking countries include Queanbeyan, Griffith, Snowy River, Walgett, Yarrowlunla, Armidale, Albury, Rylestone, Cooma–Monaro, Shellharbour and Wingecarribee. This geographical dispersion is summarised in Figure 3.

The age structure of the overseas born population is significantly different from that of the Australian born. The overseas born are on average a much older population. At the time of the 1991 Census, 19.3 per cent of the Australian born population were aged 55 and over, whereas many of the European communities have over 40 per cent of their community in this age bracket and some have over 60 per cent aged 55 and over.

There are statistically significant differences in terms of industry of occupation between those born overseas in mainly non-English speaking countries and those born in Australia or another English speaking country.

Some industry sectors have a much higher concentration of employees born in non-English speaking countries. These include the manufacturing, accommodation, and cafe and restaurant sectors. In other industry sectors, including government administration and defence, education, and the culture and recreation industries, people of non-English speaking background are significantly under-represented.

The representation of people born in non-English speaking countries in the occupational categories of manager, administrator and professional does not differ significantly from their representation across all occupational categories. Some categories of occupation, however, show marked under-representation by workers who were born in mainly non-English speaking countries. These categories include para-professionals, clerks, and sales and personal service workers. On the other hand, workers born in mainly non-English speaking countries are significantly over-represented in some categories, such as trade persons, plant and machine operators and drivers, and labourers and related workers.

Figure 3: Percentage of population born overseas in mainly non-English speaking countries, in Statistical Local Areas of NSW, 1991

Source: *The People of New South Wales*, Ethnic Affairs Commission, 1994

Map not available

1 Albury	28 Coolah	55 Gundagai	82 Murray	109 Tamworth
2 Armidale	29 Coolamon	56 Gunnedah	83 Murrumbidgee	110 Temora
3 Ballina	30 Cooma-Monaro	57 Gunning	84 Murrurundi	111 Tenterfield
4 Balranald	31 Coonabarabran	58 Guyra	85 Muswellbrook	112 Tumbarumba
5 Barraba	32 Coonamble	59 Harden	86 Nambucca	113 Tumut
6 Bathurst	33 Cootamundra	60 Hastings	87 Narrabri	114 Tweed
7 Bega Valley	34 Copmanhurst	61 Hay	88 Narrandera	115 Ulmarra
8 Bellingen	35 Corowa	62 Holbrook	89 Narromine	116 Uralla
9 Berrigan	36 Cowra	63 Hume	90 Newcastle	117 Urana
10 Bingara	37 Crookwell	64 Inverell	91 Nundle	118 Wagga Wagga
11 Bland	38 Culcairn	65 Jerilderie	92 Nymboida	119 Wakool
12 Blayney	39 Deniliquin	66 Junee	93 Oberon	120 Walcha
13 Bogan	40 Dubbo	67 Kempsey	94 Orange	121 Walgett
14 Bombala	41 Dumaresq	68 Kiama	95 Parkes	122 Warren
15 Boorowa	42 Dungog	69 Kyogle	96 Parry	123 Weddin
16 Bourke	43 Eurobodalla	70 Lachlan	97 Port Stephens	124 Wellington
17 Brewarrina	44 Evans	71 Lake Macquarie	98 Queanbeyan	125 Wentworth
18 Broken Hill	45 Forbes	72 Leeton	99 Quirindi	126 Windouran
19 Byron	46 Gilgandra	73 Lismore	100 Richmond River	127 Wingecarribee
20 Cabonne	47 Glen Innes	74 Lockhart	101 Rylstone	128 Wollongong
21 Carrathool	48 Gloucester	75 Maclean	102 Scone	129 Yallaroi
22 Casino	49 Goulburn	76 Maitland	103 Severn	130 Yarrowlumla
23 Central Darling	50 Grafton	77 Manilla	104 Shellharbour	131 Yass
24 Cessnock	51 Greater Lithgow	78 Merriwa	105 Shoalhaven	132 Young
25 Cobar	52 Greater Taree	79 Moree Plains	106 Singleton	133 Unicorp.Far West
26 Coffs Harbour	53 Great Lakes	80 Mudgee	107 Snowy River	
27 Conargo	54 Griffith	81 Mulwaree	108 Tallaganda	

2.2 KEY ISSUES RAISED IN THE CONSULTATIONS

The Terms of Reference for this Review into ethnic affairs in NSW included identifying “the key social, economic, cultural and political issues in the mid-1990s and for the coming decade that affect people from ethnic communities living in New South Wales”.

To assist in this process the Review Steering Committee held a series of public meetings and consultations with a broad range of stakeholders including representatives of ethnic community groups and other interested individuals. Included at Attachment 4 is a full list of these consultations.

Following the release of the Government’s Green Paper in May 1996, many organisations and individuals as well as Government agencies provided further comment on the issues which are affecting members of ethnic communities in this state. A full list of submissions received on the Green Paper is included at Attachment 5.

What follows is a summary of the key issues raised in the course of the Review. They reflect views and perceptions as stated in the consultation process and do not necessarily reflect current Government policy or priorities. The issues are listed in alphabetical order: Ageing; Arts; Communication and Consultation; Community Relations; Education; Employment and Unemployment; Government Services; Health; Housing and Planning; Immigration; Interpreting and Translation Services; Law and Justice; Local Government; Minority Groups and Emerging Communities; People with Disabilities; Refugees; Rural Issues; Women; Young People and Other Issues Raised.

AGEING

As the statistics contained in this Report reveal, the ageing of the State’s population will become an increasingly important social and public policy issue up to and beyond the year 2000. This ageing trend affects many of the more established ethnic communities whose numbers are greatest in the older age groups. It is therefore not surprising that ageing issues were some of the most frequently raised concerns in both the public consultations and in Green Paper submissions.

Mainstream community services for older people, such as the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program and institutional care services, while acknowledged to be providing quality services, are still perceived to be inadequate to meet the growing needs of older people of non-English speaking background. These people require culturally appropriate services, including language services, which are considered to be most commonly and efficiently provided by grouping together older people of similar backgrounds.

While the Commonwealth currently has major responsibility for aged care through its income support programs and by directly supplying a range of services, including health services, it is likely that in the future the State Government will increasingly take responsibility for an additional range of aged care services. The next five years provide an ideal opportunity to build productive partnerships which will ensure that structures and services meet the needs of older people of non-English speaking background.

Issues:

- ◆ Culturally appropriate care and accommodation is needed in both institutional and community based settings.
- ◆ Access must be improved to culturally appropriate health care and other human and community services.
- ◆ Culturally appropriate activities and services are needed for older people from culturally diverse backgrounds. This includes the need for existing recreational and community facilities (such as Senior Citizens' Centres) to include activities appropriate to older people from ethnic communities. This is particularly an issue for Local Government.
- ◆ The needs of well older people of non-English speaking background need to be better addressed as many experience cultural barriers and language difficulties in accessing mainstream services. Attention is particularly necessary for older people who do not have established family or community networks, for example amongst some refugee communities and in rural areas.
- ◆ There is a growing need for more bi-lingual workers and volunteers to assist older people of non-English speaking background, particularly in nursing homes. As many older people revert to their first language, there is also a need for improved access to interpreter services for them.
- ◆ Improved access to education and training is needed for older people, including English language programs.

ARTS

Cultural activities, arts and crafts play a critical role in a modern multicultural society. Not only do they allow the community to maintain cultural traditions, and assist in the successful settlement process in a new homeland, but they also serve to enrich society by allowing young people and others to learn and appreciate new forms of artistic expression.

Multicultural art forms also have the potential to attract tourism and provide valuable and unique commercial opportunities. For example, multicultural arts and crafts are expected to contribute to the successful staging of the Sydney 2000 Olympics, which was marketed to the world as the *Multicultural Olympics*.

The recent restoration of Carnivale as a state-wide multicultural arts festival provides a major opportunity to showcase artists' work from diverse cultural backgrounds.



Photo: Effy Alexakis

Issues:

- ◆ Mainstream arts organisations need to take responsibility for ensuring that diverse art forms, including arts and crafts practised by our culturally diverse population, are supported equitably.
- ◆ Where governments provide assistance in the form of grants and awards, they need to ensure notions of excellence based on western arts traditions are not the sole criteria for financial support. Criteria for allocating grants and awards need to reflect the cultural diversity of New South Wales.
- ◆ Community based ethnic arts organisations need assistance with ongoing costs and purchase of equipment and materials.
- ◆ Carnivale should not assume all the responsibility for the funding and exhibition of multicultural community arts in NSW.
- ◆ There is a need to promote the participation of artists of non-English speaking background in arts, cultural and educational institutions.
- ◆ There is a need for local councils to play an increased leadership role in supporting and displaying the diversity of arts and culture that exist amongst their culturally diverse residents.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

Providing timely, accessible and cost effective information about government and non-government services is a challenge in a culturally diverse society. It requires innovative approaches to communications and new ways of responding to the changing needs of both government and the community.

New communication technologies, and the degree to which all members of society can share in their benefits, is an increasingly important subject. In addition, the importance of involving and consulting with members of ethnic communities was stressed during the public comment phase of the Green Paper.

Issues:

- ◆ New communication technologies should be used to improve access to information for people of non-English speaking background, particularly on-line information in community languages.
- ◆ Access for members of ethnic communities to new information technologies needs to be addressed, particularly in cases where essential information is provided in on-line form only and is no longer available in printed form.
- ◆ Access to telephone-based information services in community languages for essential information needs to be further developed.
- ◆ Concern was expressed that new communication technologies (such as the Internet) can be used to propagate information in breach of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act and the Commonwealth Racial Hatred Act.
- ◆ Improved consultative mechanisms with ethnic communities are needed, particularly models that recognise the diversity that exists within the community. For example appropriate consultation mechanisms are needed to communicate with people with specific needs such as older people or young people of non-English speaking background, as well as with specific ethnic, language or religious groups.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Australia is a cosmopolitan, multicultural and relatively tolerant country. However, the reported instances of racism indicate that community relations may be more fragile than generally assumed.

A related matter is community tension which arises when, for example, overseas events impact on ethnic community groups. Examples include the Gulf War in 1991, the war in the former Yugoslavia and the dispute between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Agencies such as the Department of School Education and the Anti-Discrimination Board play a vital role in developing inter-cultural understanding. For example, community relations can be significantly enhanced in the longer term by ensuring school students have opportunities to learn the value of different cultures and languages. The Ethnic Affairs Commission also plays a role in providing mediation services in times of conflict.

Issues:

- ◆ Harmonious community relations cannot be taken for granted, especially when overseas and local events cause tensions in the Australian community.
- ◆ Instances of racism and racial vilification need to be carefully monitored and targeted by preventative strategies.
- ◆ Agencies with responsibilities in this area must provide and support initiatives which improve community relations.
- ◆ Awareness and understanding of issues within and between ethnic communities, as well as between ethnic communities and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need to be improved.
- ◆ More use could be made of existing conflict resolution services, such as Community Justice Centres. Such services need to be culturally appropriate and accessible.
- ◆ Education and increased public awareness about the diversity within ethnic communities and their different cultural practices should contribute to improving community understanding and tolerance.
- ◆ There is a need to address the way some sections of the media stereotype certain ethnic communities and report on ethnic affairs issues in a distorted manner. This is particularly a problem in the reporting of crime.

EDUCATION

Education, particularly of children, has a critical role to play in creating a harmonious community and in promoting the strengths of our linguistically and culturally diverse society. Education is also critical in ensuring that members of ethnic communities are given equal opportunities to participate fully in social and economic life.

Within this context English as a second language courses are of critical importance in ensuring that people of non-English speaking background have improved opportunities in education. Institutions such as the Adult Migrant English Service and Intensive English Centres are important in enabling people to learn English.

The education system can provide opportunities for many people in this State to learn languages other than English. The Community Language Program for example is an important initiative in this regard. In addition many communities have successfully established ethnic schools which teach languages and culture. This is recognised as an important aspect of cultural maintenance.

Instances of overt and covert racism within educational institutions are also of concern.

Issues:

- ◆ English as a Second Language (ESL) provisions are not always sufficient to meet the needs of school students. For example, assistance is required for students who have a grasp of English, but who need additional support to better manage the demands of the mainstream school curriculum.
- ◆ Teaching languages other than English, and the maintenance of bi-lingual skills, not only assists in community development, but may also improve our economic opportunities in the international marketplace. These language skills need to be better integrated into professional and career training. This will require some tertiary institutions to make curriculum changes to allow students to continue to study community languages concurrent with their professional training.
- ◆ The cost to ethnic communities of maintaining ethnic schools is high. There is a perceived need for additional government support to ensure that these schools continue to operate.
- ◆ Racism must be recognised and dealt with at all levels in educational institutions. This requires raising awareness of the nature and extent of the issue, and designing effective strategies to deal with the problem at both a state and local level.
- ◆ Effective cross-cultural and anti-racism training programs for students, as well as for all providers of education services such as teachers and counsellors are needed. These programs are desirable at all levels in the education system, from pre-schools to tertiary education institutions.
- ◆ Pathways between secondary and further education, and training and employment institutions need to be further developed to meet the varying needs of adult learners of non-English speaking background.
- ◆ Many non-English speaking adults require improved opportunities for post-school education and training, including work-based training and retraining. This includes access to adult language, literacy and numeracy programs.
- ◆ Timetabling and locations for post school education need to be accessible and family friendly, in particular for specific disadvantaged groups such as women with family responsibilities, and older people of non-English speaking background.

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

People from some non-English speaking backgrounds face higher than average rates of unemployment. These rates are linked to factors such as recency of arrival and poor English language proficiency. They are also linked to the high concentration of workers from non-English speaking backgrounds in manufacturing industries that have been restructured and have incurred significant job losses.

In addition, youth unemployment in some ethnic communities is higher than the Australian average. Recent changes to Commonwealth funded employment programs may reduce the assistance available to many of these young people, along with other groups in the community.

The number of skilled workers entering Australia has increased in proportionate terms since the post-war immigration period, because current immigration programs give weighting to skills and qualifications.



Photo: Karen Mork

Issues:

- ◆ Many workers of non-English speaking background experience difficulty in gaining recognition of their overseas skills and qualifications. These workers often lack access to appropriate information in order to maximise their employment opportunities. In addition, many Australian employers do not value work experience gained overseas.
- ◆ Under-employment of workers of non-English speaking background, and the de-skilling which often accompanies, is a significant issue. A report of BIMPR indicated that 34.8% of immigrants of non-English speaking background were over-educated for their jobs, compared with 11.6% of Australian born workers.
- ◆ The lack of accessible and easily understood occupational health and safety information for workers of non-English speaking background remains a problem and often places such workers in the high risk category, particularly in blue collar industries.
- ◆ There is a need for targeted training and work experience programs for workers of non-English speaking background, especially for young people, and older workers unemployed by industry restructuring.
- ◆ Language, literacy and numeracy training, particularly in the workplace needs to be better integrated with job training and retraining.
- ◆ Australian employers and unions need to be more responsive to the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce. They also need to ensure their staff are trained in cross cultural issues and that workplaces are free of racism.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

New South Wales Government agencies have been required to incorporate ethnic affairs strategies into policy and planning since 1983, when the Ethnic Affairs Policy Statements (EAPS) Program began. This program was followed by the adoption of the Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society in 1993. Both programs required the preparation of comprehensive plans showing how ethnic affairs strategies would be incorporated into the agency's work.

Implementation of the EAPS and Charter programs has been uneven, with some agencies providing only limited support for ethnic affairs issues. In addition, there is a perceived lack of accountability by agencies as regards outcomes for members of ethnic communities.

Issues:

- ◆ Reforms of Government administration must take into account the impact on ethnic affairs policies and services. Departmental restructuring has often resulted in ethnic affairs initiatives being neglected.

- ◆ Frequently responsibility for ethnic affairs has been consigned to the human resources section in Government agencies, rather than being integrated into each agency's core business, including their corporate planning and service delivery functions.
- ◆ Ethnic affairs initiatives, such as the use of accredited interpreters and translators, need to be built into divisional and regional office budgets, to ensure that these initiatives can be effectively implemented throughout Government agencies.
- ◆ Many services formerly provided by Government have been contracted out to non-government agencies without requirements for ethnic affairs issues to be incorporated into those agencies' policies and services. It is important that minimum access and equity standards are maintained in contracted out services.
- ◆ Services which receive government grants and subsidies should be required to ensure access and equity to clients of non-English speaking background, including providing access to interpreters and translators where required.
- ◆ The Ethnic Affairs Commission must have adequate powers to influence State Government agencies' ethnic affairs performance.
- ◆ There is a need for a legislative basis for ethnic affairs activities to ensure all Government agencies implement Government policy.

HEALTH

The health needs of people of non-English speaking background are an ongoing issue of concern in the community, particularly in terms of access to culturally appropriate health care services and appropriately qualified interpreters.

Issues:

- ◆ Improved access to culturally appropriate counselling services is required, particularly in the area of mental health. There is also a need for improved care for refugees, especially those experiencing dementia and other health problems associated with their pre-arrival experience.
- ◆ Bi-lingual health care professionals, including doctors, nurses and dentists need to be readily available. This may require a review of current barriers facing the registration of overseas trained medical professionals such as doctors.
- ◆ Health care professionals should be aware of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the population. Health professionals need to better meet the health needs of specific groups in the community, including some groups of women from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- ◆ All health care professionals, including private medical practitioners and dentists, women's health specialists and staff in rural areas need to be made more aware of how to book and use qualified interpreters.

- ◆ Specialised health services targeted to people of culturally diverse background, such as the Transcultural Mental Health Centre, Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors and the Health Care Interpreting Service are seen as valuable services which require ongoing support.
- ◆ Health promotions and life education programs need to be structured and targeted in ways that will ensure the needs of people from diverse cultural backgrounds are met. Chronic health and social problems, including alcoholism, domestic violence and family breakdown are often as great a problem in ethnic communities as in other communities.

HOUSING AND PLANNING

The housing and planning needs of the State's culturally diverse population creates a number of challenges to both the public and private sectors.

In the past most housing stock and residential areas have been built with the nuclear family in mind and according to certain conceptions about domestic and residential life. However for some individuals and family groups of non-English speaking background, particularly those on low incomes, these models of design have not always met their needs.

This requires increased opportunities for community input into the design, location, and accessibility of new housing, as well as greater consideration of the social needs of the community in planning decisions. Access to essential services such as public transport, education and health facilities, retail shopping, employment opportunities and community and recreational facilities are seen as vital. The integration of housing with these services and facilities is particularly important in areas where large numbers of new arrivals on low incomes live. This requires effective planning and coordination of action by many Commonwealth, State and Local Government agencies in consultation with community groups.

Issues:

- ◆ Access to affordable housing is a problem faced by many members of ethnic community groups.
- ◆ The absence of specific housing assistance for refugees remains an ongoing problem to the refugee community.
- ◆ More flexibility in housing design to better reflect the needs and aspirations of our culturally diverse community is an issue. Increased options for extended family accommodation, particularly in public housing, need to be investigated.
- ◆ Residents and potential residents of culturally diverse backgrounds need to be consulted more on planning and housing decisions in their area.
- ◆ The issue of racism and harassment in public housing facilities and in local neighbourhoods requires ongoing attention.

IMMIGRATION

New South Wales currently receives more than 43 per cent of settler arrivals in Australia. Absolute numbers of future arrivals are difficult to predict since they depend on Commonwealth Government targets and refugee crises.

Many settlers, especially those who enter under Australia's humanitarian program such as refugees, need assistance from Government and community services during the settlement period. This may include English language training, assistance with housing and social services, as well as some ethno-specific community services. Victims of torture and trauma may also need counselling services.

More inter-Government planning and cooperation is necessary to ensure that government services are provided in a coordinated and accessible manner. While structures such as the New South Wales Interdepartmental Committee on Migrant Settlement (NICOMS) do exist, this is hampered by jurisdictional issues and lack of a formalised agreement between the Commonwealth and State Governments.

Issues:

- ◆ Information and advice provided to new arrivals to assist them in the settlement process needs to be continuously improved. This includes the timely provision of advice on employment and training opportunities.
- ◆ Migrants of all ages need improved access to English language classes.
- ◆ A more effective dialogue between Commonwealth, State and local Governments is necessary to better plan and coordinate services to migrants. This dialogue needs to be based on more effective community consultation.
- ◆ There is a need for more State involvement in planning for immigration and settlement, and integration of planning with state and regional development strategies including settlement outside the major metropolitan areas.
- ◆ Urban settlement planning needs to always include accessibility to relevant Government and community services as a criterion for development.
- ◆ Changes in Commonwealth migration policies have significant impacts on States such as New South Wales. The Commonwealth needs to improve its planning mechanisms both before and after new policies are announced to ensure an appropriate State response, and to ensure that individuals and communities are not adversely affected by the change.

INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATION SERVICES

Access to information in community languages remains an ongoing equity issue for many people of non-English speaking background in New South Wales. Even those with basic English language proficiency often require interpreter services in times of stress or when dealing with complex issues.

Interpreting and translation services provide a critical link for people of non-English speaking background when they seek to use government services.

While a number of private agencies currently supply interpreters, responsibility for the provision of language services to the clients of New South Wales Government agencies is shared by the Ethnic Affairs Commission (Language Services Division) and the NSW Department of Health (Health Care Interpreting Service). Responsibility for the clients of Commonwealth agencies is assumed by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (Telephone and Interpreter Service).

Issues:

- ◆ New South Wales Government agencies do not always use interpreter services when required. This is frequently the result of staff's lack of knowledge about policy and procedures for booking and using interpreters, or inadequate allocation of funding for this purpose. This appears to be a particular issue for corporatised agencies, and in regional offices of Departments that operate outside metropolitan centres.
- ◆ Non-metropolitan areas are particularly disadvantaged in the supply and availability of interpreter services. The use of new information technologies such as video-conferencing may assist in overcoming this situation.
- ◆ There is a need to recruit and train more interpreters to ensure availability, particularly in minority and emerging languages.
- ◆ There is a shortage of female interpreters in some languages. The availability of female interpreters is a critical issue in situations of domestic violence and sexual assault.
- ◆ There is a need to improve public and private sector awareness of the availability, role and use of interpreters and translators.
- ◆ There are gaps in service provision for Government funded community organisations, only some of which are eligible to apply for exemptions from charges.
- ◆ Any unethical and unprofessional behaviour by interpreters must be seriously addressed by all service providers. More effective mechanisms for receiving and acting on complaints from clients are required. Consideration should also be given to the establishment of an industry-wide registration system.

- ◆ Court and legal situations place special demands on interpreters due to the complexity of the issues and the formal procedures that are followed. There is need for further training for court interpreters, as well as legal practitioners, about interpreting in a legal context, including training in legal ethics.

LAW AND JUSTICE

Many people of non-English speaking background do not understand the Australian legal system and may bring from their country of origin different understandings of the role of the law, police and the judiciary.

Recent initiatives have assisted in bringing the law and justice systems closer to the people whom they serve. These include the employment of ethnic liaison officers, revised training programs for office holders, community consultation and improved attention to racist incidents and crimes against members of ethnic communities. On the whole there has also been improved media coverage of these events.

Data collected by official agencies suggest that young people of non-English speaking background on average commit *less* crime than the youth population as a whole. However, young people from some ethnic community groups are over-represented in the State's juvenile detention centres. There is a perception that they may experience harsher treatment and suffer from cultural misunderstandings as well as language difficulties when matters are taken to court.

Issues:

- ◆ There is a need for improved information on the Australian legal system, especially for migrants from countries which have a different legal and justice system. This information should also be tailored to specific groups in the community, including young people and older persons of non-English speaking background as well as to women involved in complex family law and domestic violence cases.
- ◆ There is a need for ongoing cross-cultural training of police officers, judicial officers, court officials, Juvenile Justice and Corrective Services departmental staff and the legal profession. There is also a need to recruit and train more staff of diverse cultural backgrounds for these positions and in these professions.
- ◆ There is a need for clearly developed protocols and practices relating to the availability and use of interpreter services in law and order situations, particularly in cases involving police and the courts.
- ◆ Law reform proposals need to be based on widespread community consultation.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Government is a significant provider of community services, many of which attract State and Commonwealth funding.

Local Government is also responsible for many of the planning decisions which enable ethnic community groups to establish facilities such as temples, churches and meeting places.

Some Councils have adopted ethnic affairs initiatives to service their culturally diverse communities. These programs have highlighted the need for the provision of accessible, culturally appropriate community services and facilities, as well as greater access to information and the provision of some services in community languages.

At this stage the impact of ethnic affairs initiatives undertaken by Local Councils has been uneven.

Issues:

- ◆ There is a need for a more effective coordinating strategy to stimulate reforms in Local Government relating to implementation of ethnic affairs programs.
- ◆ Lack of access to community facilities for ethnic community groups remains a problem in some areas and requires attention and clear policy direction on behalf of local councils as well as from the State Government.
- ◆ Inconsistent planning decisions can create problems for some ethnic community groups, particularly decisions that prevent the construction or use of places of worship.
- ◆ There is a need for improved information dissemination to non-English speaking residents about Council services, facilities and programs.
- ◆ Consultation with local residents, including those of non-English speaking background, is needed particularly in regard to local social and community planning.
- ◆ Improved staff training and education in cross-cultural issues and anti-racism strategies is required throughout local government workplaces, and also in council assisted services.

MINORITY GROUPS AND EMERGING COMMUNITIES

Minority groups and emerging communities are characterised by their size (generally comprising no more than 8,000 members in any particular state), length of residency in Australia (the majority have been resident in Australia for ten years or less and are often in the “survival” stage of settlement), and a lack of community infrastructure. A high proportion of the members of these communities have been refugees.

Emerging communities include those which may be larger in number than minority groups when considered from a State-wide perspective, but which are emerging in a particular geographical area where ethno-specific services and community resources may be scarce or non-existent.

As a result of their small numbers and the higher costs associated with delivering services to these small numbers of people, few if any ethno-specific services exist for these groups.

Issues:

- ◆ Members of minority ethnic groups experience social isolation, as they often lack support networks and social infrastructure.
- ◆ Forums for cultural and artistic expression can provide important opportunities for minority communities to network and create support mechanisms amongst themselves.
- ◆ Minority groups miss out on resource allocations by Government agencies which use minimum numbers as a criterion for providing programs and services.
- ◆ There is a lack of translated information in community languages for minority and emerging groups.
- ◆ There are few accredited interpreters and translators for these groups.
- ◆ Host agencies, such as non-government community organisations, may need to be assisted to provide accommodation and support for workers and volunteers from minority groups.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The needs of people with disabilities who are of non-English speaking background have received little attention in the past, partly due to the fact that these people are not an homogeneous group. Their needs, language, cultural backgrounds and their English language proficiency are diverse. The combination of these factors does not allow for easy appraisal or simplistic solutions.

Two important needs which require urgent attention are access by people of non-English speaking background with disabilities to services which foster their independence and quality of life, and the provision of support services to their carers.

Issues:

- ◆ Access to mainstream services for people with disabilities by those of non-English speaking background must be improved.
- ◆ Culturally appropriate activities and services need to be provided for people of non-English speaking background with disabilities.

- ◆ Cross cultural training is needed for all service providers, including mainstream services which may be accessed by people with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- ◆ Training for ethnic workers about the needs of people with disabilities is important, especially in the smaller communities that are unlikely to have disability specific workers and services.
- ◆ Employment, training and rehabilitation programs must be made more accessible to people of non-English speaking background.
- ◆ Access to English language classes for people with disabilities, including children and young people, must be increased.
- ◆ Increased support is required to carers of non-English speaking background, including assisting them to set up their own support groups.
- ◆ There is a need to improve the provision of information to non-English speaking parents of children with disabilities so they are fully aware of all the services and facilities that are available.

REFUGEES

Refugees and other people entering Australia under the Humanitarian Program represent a significantly disadvantaged group in our culturally diverse society. The often sudden circumstances of their departure from their countries of origin, their lack of financial resources on arrival in Australia and the psychological and emotional effects of traumatic experiences in their home countries can seriously affect their settlement into this country.

While refugees share a number of needs in common with other migrants, they often have additional needs associated with their pre-arrival experiences. Lack of family and community support structures, combined with an absence of an integrated government policy on refugee settlement, can create barriers to their successful settlement and participation in Australian society.

Issues:

- ◆ State Government Departments, particularly Health, Housing and Community Services, and the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs need to work together if consistent and coordinated services are to be available for refugees.
- ◆ Appropriate information must be provided to refugees in a timely manner, about available services, including specialty services such as the Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors.

- ◆ Bi-lingual counselling and other treatment services need to be readily available to newly arrived refugees, particularly those who have been the victims of torture and trauma. Delay in providing these services can result in longer term effects and more costly services later. These services also need to be made available to refugees living in regional and rural areas. There is also need for increased services targeted to refugee women.
- ◆ Strategies are needed to assist refugees in gaining and maintaining appropriate education and viable employment. These strategies need to recognise common refugee problems such as a disrupted education due to conflict in their country of origin, a lack of documentation of qualifications and experience gained overseas, as well as the after effects of torture and trauma.

RURAL ISSUES

While the vast majority of people of non-English speaking background live in the Greater Sydney area, there are numerous individuals living in rural New South Wales. According to the 1991 Census, 21 per cent of people in the Sydney Statistical Division were of non-English speaking background, while the figures for the Illawarra and the Hunter divisions were 11.9 per cent and 4.6 per cent respectively. The average for the remaining local government areas across New South Wales was 2.8 per cent.

Many of these individuals are isolated and lack the community support networks and targeted services available in the metropolitan region. This is particularly true for older people, especially those living in nursing homes or who live outside towns or on farms.

Issues:

- ◆ There is a perceived lack of demand for services in rural areas, due to the difficulties experienced by small groups and isolated individuals in lobbying for their needs.
- ◆ Government agencies which use minimum numbers criteria to allocate programs and services do not take account of the needs of small groups and isolated individuals in rural areas.
- ◆ There is a need for improved support and training for service providers in rural areas, including health workers and teachers.
- ◆ People of non-English speaking background in rural areas face major problems in gaining access to accredited interpreter services.
- ◆ New communication technologies (such as free-call and video-conferencing) and the improved use of outreach services could provide rural residents with greater access to culturally appropriate services and advice.

- ◆ Government agencies, as well as local councils and shires, need to ensure that non-English speaking residents in rural areas are aware of the services available and how to access them. This includes information on agricultural issues. Community radio may be a useful vehicle for this purpose.
- ◆ There is a need for improved consultation mechanisms in rural areas so that rural ethnic communities can have a voice and a means to engage with local service providers on issues including access and equity.
- ◆ The Ethnic Affairs Commission's regional advisory structure needs to improve its outreach into country areas. Such structures need to be better known to the community and more effectively provide feedback where appropriate.
- ◆ Regions on the fringes of metropolitan Sydney, such as the Central Coast and Blue Mountains, are often overlooked in rural and urban strategies and hence lack local service providers. These regions have growing numbers of people of non-English speaking background who face difficulties in accessing metropolitan-based services.

WOMEN

Women of non-English speaking background are under-represented in the professional, clerical, and sales and personal service occupations, and over-represented in the labouring, plant and machinery occupations.

Some groups of women of non-English speaking background suffer a high risk of exploitation, particularly in industries which rely on cheap, outwork labour. This issue has received extensive media attention.

It is documented that women of non-English speaking background also experience disadvantage in enterprise bargaining due to a tendency for women generally to achieve less favourable outcomes than those achieved by men, compounded by reduced English language proficiency.

According to the 1991 Census, women of non-English speaking background are less likely than their male counterparts to speak English well. This affects their employment opportunities and access to services.

Women in rural areas frequently experience isolation due to cultural, language and geographical factors. There are also specific issues associated with girls and older women from culturally diverse backgrounds, as well as refugee women who frequently experience isolation and lack access to community infrastructure and support.



Photo: Karen Mork

Issues:

- ◆ Improved access to training and education is essential for non-English speaking background women, including English language, literacy and numeracy programs. These programs need to be flexible in the way they are delivered, and include appropriate levels of childcare provision. Women who are no longer classified as new arrivals also need to be provided for.
- ◆ Parties to enterprise agreements need to ensure that there is consultation with women of non-English speaking background who are affected by the agreements.
- ◆ As regards employment, there is a need for outreach strategies to inform women of their rights and the services available to them, particularly amongst outworkers.
- ◆ There is a need for increased use of accredited interpreters for women, especially in crisis situations such as domestic violence and sexual assault. There is also a need for an increased number of bi-lingual counsellors experienced in women's issues.
- ◆ There is a need for women in minority and emerging communities to have access to accredited female interpreters.

YOUNG PEOPLE

Improving language, cultural, educational, employment and other opportunities for young people is vital if they are to participate fully in society and at the same time maintain their family's cultural values, religion and language.

There are many stereotypes about young people from some ethnic backgrounds, such as the general stereotype that young people of non-English speaking background are over-represented in the law and justice system, even though the opposite is actually the case.

There is however anecdotal evidence to suggest that people of non-English speaking background who come into contact with the police and judiciary sometimes receive harsher treatment. Language difficulties and differing cultural expectations can compound their problems.

Other problem areas where young people of non-English speaking background appear to be disadvantaged include unemployment, health and homelessness.

Young people themselves wish to be treated with respect and be provided with opportunities so that they can actively participate in society. Young people stressed that they must be recognised as individuals in their own right.

Issues:

- ◆ Young people of non-English speaking background who come into contact with the legal system should be assisted, wherever possible, to maintain or develop support links with their communities.
- ◆ There is a need for improved cooperation, trust and understanding between police and young people of non-English speaking background.
- ◆ Youth consultation mechanisms need to be developed which pro-actively involve young people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds in decision-making on matters which affect their lives.
- ◆ There is a need for improved options for young people of non-English speaking background in vocational education and training, higher education and labour market programs.
- ◆ Gender equity issues for young people should be better addressed in the planning and provision of education and training services, including strategies to improve young women's participation in non-traditional areas of work.
- ◆ There should be improved access to local recreational facilities for young people of culturally diverse backgrounds, particularly on a free or low cost basis.

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

During the consultations or as part of written submissions received on the Green Paper two additional issues were raised that directly relate to ethnic affairs:

- ♦ Ethnic communities and individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds should not be viewed as an homogeneous group. Like all people who make up a society, members of our State's ethnic communities exhibit wide diversity in their socio-economic status, educational background, length of residency, English language proficiency, geographic location, cultural and religious background, family size, age, gender, etc. This diversity of ethnic communities needs to be acknowledged, with services and strategies designed accordingly.
- ♦ The family unit within many ethnic communities plays a special role in maintaining social and cultural traditions. As the children of migrants grow up and adopt new roles and behaviours, this can cause tensions with some parents who may find their own values and beliefs challenged. This inter-generational conflict can result in varying degrees of tension and family breakdown.

CONCLUSION: KEY ISSUES RAISED

As the above list of issues demonstrates, ethnic affairs touches on the full breadth of public policy. While Government agencies are already addressing many of these issues, considerable work still remains to be done.

Agencies need to assess seriously each of the issues raised above and, where issues lie within their responsibility, address them through new or ongoing initiatives. Section 3 of this Report describes how many of these issues will be addressed and reported upon.

2.3 GOVERNMENT CONTEXT

The development of an effective new direction in ethnic affairs must be consistent with other NSW Government policies as well as with the different responsibilities and policies of the Commonwealth Government and Local Councils.

This section summarises the major policy responsibilities relevant to ethnic affairs of each sphere of government.

2.3.1 RELATED NSW GOVERNMENT POLICIES

There are four key areas of Government policy which are particularly relevant to the implementation of ethnic affairs reforms in New South Wales. They are ethnic affairs, social justice, financial reform and public administration.

◆ Ethnic Affairs

The NSW Government's approach to ethnic affairs is a whole-of-government approach. In his speech to the Ethnic Communities' Council of New South Wales on 25 August 1996, Premier Bob Carr described what was the Government's key approach to ethnic affairs. He stated:

“Firstly ethnic affairs is a priority for the Government. Secondly, ethnic affairs will be part of the core business of every Government agency... and thirdly we will work with you (the community) and keep you informed of our progress.”

The Government has committed itself to ensuring that New South Wales is a place where each and every person has the opportunity to realise their full potential. The Government's March 1995 document, *Ethnic Affairs Policy - Taking up the Challenge*, for example, states:

“Ethnic Affairs in the 90's is about the need for respect of cultural differences, promotion of social justice and economic efficiency. It is about building a society which gives a 'fair go' to all persons regardless of their race, religion, socio-economic status, and which is economically sound.”

In this document the Government also gave its commitment to ensuring that NSW citizens of non-English speaking background have equal access to, and an equitable share of, the resources the Government manages on behalf of the community. It also noted the Government's commitment to the principles of multiculturalism and to multicultural policies which enable all Australians to realise their full potential and participate in the benefits this country has to offer.

These commitments build on New South Wales' record of supporting ethnic communities and providing a legislative framework for protecting the rights of all people regardless of their race, colour, nationality, or ethnic or religious background.

◆ Social Justice

The New South Wales Government's commitment to social justice plays a key role in shaping its ethnic affairs agenda. The *Social Justice Budget Statement* which was produced for the 1995-96 Budget states:

“The basis of a fair society is the equal worth of all its members. Our community should strive to help all people to meet their basic needs such as income, food, shelter, education and health. The fulfilment of individual potential, and the achievement of self respect and personal autonomy depend on fair access to opportunities and life chances. This should, of course, apply regardless of a person's race, gender, sexuality, age, disability, religion, national origin, marital status or political belief.

The concept of social justice for the New South Wales Government is built on four principles:

Equity - there should be fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly for those most in need;

Rights - greater equality of rights should be established and promoted, and there should be improved accountability for decision makers;

Access - all people should have fairer access to the economic resources, services and rights essential to improving their quality of life; and

Participation - all people should have the fullest opportunity to genuinely participate in the community and be consulted on decisions which affect their lives.”

◆ Financial Reform

The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring all policies and programs are consistent with its financial reforms. The Government's Financial Statement, which was released in June 1995, states:

“The fundamental objective [of the Government's approach to financial reform] is to achieve a sustained enhancement of the community's standard of living through nurturing an environment that produces opportunities for all to reach their full potential.

To provide quality job opportunities for current and future generations, the New South Wales economy must be outward looking, internationally competitive and innovative.

The following eight reform objectives are fundamental to achieving this vision:

- ◆ a sustainable, robust financial structure for the State, with zero net debt in the general Government sector;
- ◆ an efficient and effective social and economic infrastructure;
- ◆ consumer responsive and efficient services;

- ◆ a skilled, flexible, innovative and technologically advanced workforce;
- ◆ an internationally competitive tax system;
- ◆ an economically efficient and intelligent regulatory system;
- ◆ a climate conducive to the growth and development of an internationally competitive, outward looking business sector; and
- ◆ a world best environmental policy.”

◆ **Public Administration**

The New South Wales Government is also committed to reforms in public administration which will ensure an efficient and effective public sector. The Government’s Financial Statement (June 1995) identified improvement of the quality of public sector administration and service delivery as a major direction for all agencies:

“The Government’s objective is to create a world class public sector characterised by:

- ◆ better quality, more responsive and effective service delivery;
- ◆ improved management of resources to ensure ‘best value for money’ in the provision of services;
- ◆ optimal allocation of scarce public sector resources; and
- ◆ accountability for results.”

Each of these policy frameworks and priorities - specifying the Government’s approach to ethnic affairs, social justice, financial reform and public administration - have been considered in the development of the Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000 described in Section 3.

2.3.2 COMMONWEALTH AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

As noted throughout this Paper, ethnic affairs policies and programs are the responsibility of all levels of Government - Commonwealth, State and Local. These relationships and inter-connections are critical to the role of the NSW Government in ethnic affairs.

◆ **Commonwealth Government Responsibilities**

The Commonwealth Government is responsible for fundamental aspects of ethnic affairs policies in Australia. It controls total immigration levels and mix (for example, the total numbers under each migration program - Humanitarian, Family Reunion, Skilled Migration, etc), and the entry requirements for each category, such as skills and qualifications and English language proficiency.

In addition, the Commonwealth is responsible for providing the majority of welfare and social services support for new arrivals. Recently announced changes to this support, including an extension of waiting periods for accessing social security for some migrants may cause some flow on effects to both State and Local Government services, as well as non-government and emergency relief provisions.

The Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs is responsible for ensuring a range of settlement services are available. This includes funding non-government agencies such as Migrant Resource Centres.

The Commonwealth Government also controls citizenship policy and procedures.

Through the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research the Commonwealth Government has in the past provided all levels of Government and the community with vital information on current and future trends in population that help in the appropriate planning and delivery of services. In addition, Commonwealth funding of tertiary institutions generates academic research and debate about immigration and ethnic affairs matters.

The Commonwealth plays a role in racial discrimination matters (for example, under the Racial Discrimination Act, 1975 and the Racial Hatred Act, 1995). It influences industrial relations and training policies that impact on members of ethnic communities, including employment practices within Commonwealth agencies, and recognition of overseas skills and qualifications in cooperation with the States and Territories.

The Commonwealth sets a direction for media and communications policy, through its funding for SBS television and radio, the Charter of the ABC, and through regulating the content of material broadcast on television and other media.

The Commonwealth funds programs for members of ethnic communities, including in education (for example the Adult Migrant English Service and the Ethnic Schools Program), some health and child care programs, and other services. Many of these programs are provided through State Government agencies or Local Councils.

Across all these policies, programs and services it is important for the Commonwealth to work with the State and Territory Governments to develop and implement policies which complement each other. For example, the Commonwealth's policies on immigration have impacted disproportionately on New South Wales - currently New South Wales receives more than 43 per cent of all new migrants to Australia. Ninety-five percent of immigrants to NSW choose to settle in the Sydney region.

Historically, however, the Commonwealth has not adequately consulted with the States and Territories on policies such as levels of immigration and funding for settlement services. The agreed definition of the settlement period is "the process by which an immigrant establishes economic viability and social networks following immigration in order to contribute to, and make full use of, opportunities generally available in the receiving society". A challenge is to ensure that services provided by the Commonwealth Government do not cease after an arbitrary

period of time, and that agreement is reached with the States and Territories for ongoing provision of support. There are particular concerns about Commonwealth restrictions to migrant services and benefits in this context and how these restrictions may impact on settlement.

The National Integrated Settlement Strategy (NISS) seeks to improve the coordination of settlement support with input from community organisations. There is an urgent need for the Commonwealth to improve its information exchange with the States and Territories, and actively to include them as partners in immigration planning. Coordinated and formalised arrangements are needed on issues such as the mix of skills requirements for migrants, the timely provision of settlement services, and the provision of appropriate and targeted support services, and information on the impact of immigration on the population and environment.

Working in parallel with NISS is the New South Wales Interdepartmental Committee on Migrant Settlement (NICOMS). To date the outcomes of NICOMS have been disappointing due to the lack of agreed protocols between Commonwealth and State Government agencies. In addition, there is a need to improve the ethnic communities consultation processes of NICOMS.

◆ **Local Government Responsibilities**

Like the Commonwealth and State Governments, Local Government is responsible for a broad range of services that directly impact on not only new arrivals, but also local residents of diverse cultural backgrounds.

While every local council area in New South Wales has residents who were either born overseas or who have one or both parents born overseas, some Local Government Areas have a significant proportion of their population in this category. This poses specific challenges to those Councils, particularly in terms of ensuring information and services are delivered in an accessible and culturally appropriate manner.

Currently Councils receive funding from the Commonwealth and State Governments to develop and provide culturally appropriate child care services, libraries and other services and facilities. The peak bodies representing City and Shire Councils, the Local Government and Shires Associations, also provide support and information to Councils in the development of culturally appropriate services.

Under the NSW Local Government Act 1993 local councils have a responsibility to implement access and equity programs and report on results to the State Government's Department of Local Government.

Local Councils also make land use planning and zoning decisions which have implications for ethnic communities in matters such as the location of places of worship.

As with the Commonwealth Government, there needs to be improved cooperation between Local Councils and the State Government in developing and implementing policies and programs which meet the needs of the State's culturally diverse population.

2.4 NON-GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTORS

The non-government sector, which incorporates the community sector, industry, unions and associations, plus tertiary education institutions, also plays a critical role in maintaining a cohesive community and providing opportunities to our culturally diverse population.

Community-based organisations all over NSW provide members of the community with invaluable services and advice, often with meagre resources and using volunteer labour. Ethnic community organisations in particular provide services to members of their respective ethnic communities, playing an important role in promoting self-determination and independence, as well as providing a vehicle and focus for cultural maintenance. Many of these groups also function as advocacy bodies assisting individuals and groups of individuals to gain improved access to services and facilities. Within this context, the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW plays an important role in serving as a peak body to a large number of ethnic community organisations.

The private sector, including small and large businesses, not only provides the majority of job opportunities in the community, it also provides important marketing and promotion opportunities that can reflect the strengths of our culturally diverse community.

Unions, professional associations and other industry bodies play a key role in providing training and economic opportunities for a culturally diverse workforce. They also have an important role to play in maintaining a harmonious community by ensuring discrimination and harassment are not tolerated, and that individual employees, regardless of their background, are treated fairly in the workplace.

The State Government recognises these efforts and acknowledges the need to continue to work in cooperation with the non-government sector to build further on our cultural diversity. Given the large range and diversity of non-government organisations which are actively involved in providing support of one form or another to our culturally diverse population, there is an obvious need for the State Government to consult, and where appropriate work in partnership with these bodies to ensure that as a society we are pursuing complementary goals.

CONCLUSION: CONTEXT FOR THE REVIEW

As the above issues and demographic trends reveal, ethnic affairs in the 1990s occupies a dynamic position in terms of policy and services. It also touches on a very broad range of issues and government portfolios.

Ethnic affairs overlaps with most other major policy reforms of the State Government including social justice, financial and public administration reforms. In addition, ethnic affairs occupies a complex position in relation to inter-government policy and planning: many issues involve the cooperation and joint action of all three spheres of Government – Commonwealth, State and Local Government – as well as the non-government and private sectors.

Maintaining safe and cohesive communities, and building on the strengths of our cultural diversity, requires thought and action from all members of society, and from all sectors - private, community and government. Within this context the State Government has important roles to play.

What these roles are, and how the NSW Government will deliver tangible and positive outcomes for our culturally diverse society, is described in the next section.