

SECTION 4: PUTTING THE ACTION PLAN TO WORK

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring its Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000 is implemented at the earliest opportunity and in the smoothest possible way. To do this it is necessary for the Government to undertake a number of actions, including introducing changes to its legislation and administrative arrangements, promoting to Government agencies the timetable for implementing the proposed reforms, and developing resources and support structures to ensure that Government agencies are given the assistance and direction required.

This section describes each of these steps in order to put the Action Plan to work.

4.1 LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

As described in Section 3 of this report, the Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000 requires a number of minor changes to Government legislation and to administrative procedures, as follows:

4.1.1 AMENDMENTS TO ETHNIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION ACT, 1979

The Ethnic Affairs Commission Act, 1979 is the act which governs the role and functions of the Ethnic Affairs Commission as well as appointments and procedures to be followed by the Commission proper. Apart from administrative amendments in 1987, the Act has not been substantially amended since its inception.

To ensure that the Ethnic Affairs Commission Act reflects the current and future responsibilities of the State Government in ethnic affairs, and is consistent with the Government's major reforms, it is necessary to make the following amendments:

- ◆ Add a section to the Ethnic Affairs Commission Act describing the principles of cultural diversity that are relevant to the people of New South Wales.
- ◆ Add an additional object to Section 15 of the Act (Objects of the Commission) that relates to encouraging the social, cultural and economic development of New South Wales utilising the cultural diversity of the State.
- ◆ Add an additional function to Section 16 of the Act (Functions of the Commission) that relates to enabling the Commission to initiate, negotiate and assist in implementing Ethnic Affairs Agreements with other State Government agencies.
- ◆ Add an additional function to Section 16 of the Act (Functions of the Commission) that requires the Commission to assess the effectiveness of Government agencies in implementing the Government's ethnic affairs policies.
- ◆ Add an additional function to Section 16 of the Act (Functions of the Commission) that requires the Commission to prepare an annual report on the status of ethnic affairs in NSW for the Minister, to be tabled in Parliament.

Included at Attachment 7 is a copy of the Ethnic Affairs Commission Amendment Bill 1996 that was introduced into the NSW Parliament on Tuesday 22 October 1996. The Bill was passed by Parliament on Tuesday 12 November. It is proposed that the Act will be proclaimed in January 1997.

4.1.2 REGULATIONS REGARDING ANNUAL REPORTS REQUIREMENTS

As described in Section 3, the Government will require all agencies, including statutory authorities, to report on their Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) on an annual basis. Each EAPS will indicate the recent achievements of the agency in implementing the Government's Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000, as well as foreshadowing the initiatives that will be undertaken.

To ensure that EAPS are publicly accessible and fully implemented into the core business of all government agencies the Government will require, commencing in 1996-97, that EAPS be printed in each agency's annual report. In addition, those agencies who have entered into Ethnic Affairs Agreements will be required to report each year on the progress of those Agreements.

To implement these changes it is necessary to issue new regulations that require all agencies, including statutory authorities, to:

- ◆ Develop Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statements (EAPS).
- ◆ Report on the implementation of any Ethnic Affairs Agreements that have been negotiated with the Ethnic Affairs Commission.
- ◆ Report in their Annual Report the status of their EAPS and Ethnic Affairs Agreements.

These changes will be implemented through a direction from the Premier and through the issuing of a new regulation under the Annual Reports Acts. As described at 4.3 below, guidelines will be developed and distributed to agencies to assist them with these reporting requirements.

4.2 RESOURCES FOR AGENCIES

As the changes outlined in this report contain significant modifications to the ways Government agencies currently implement ethnic affairs policies and programs, it is necessary to assist agencies by the preparation of a detailed Resource Kit. This Kit, to be prepared by the Ethnic Affairs Commission, will be available in early 1997 and will contain an overview of:

- ◆ the significance of the amendments to the Ethnic Affairs Commission Act and associated regulatory changes;
- ◆ the roles and responsibilities of agencies in the implementation of the Government's Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000 and in the preparation of Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statements; and
- ◆ the specific responsibilities of Key Ethnic Affairs Agencies and those who are involved in Ethnic Affairs Agreements, plus the processes that determine this.

The Resource Kit will also describe the issues or aspects of government activity that have an ethnic affairs dimension that need to be considered in shaping the agency's corporate plan, as well as their policies, programs and services. This section will expand on the key result areas and outcomes contained in the Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000, and offer practical guidance and details on where to obtain further information. Particular emphasis will be given to service provision, and how agencies may better meet the needs of their clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The Resource Kit will also provide advice and guidelines for how agencies should prepare their Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statements, including presenting a model format for annual report entries, as well as a timetable that will assist agencies to meet their ethnic affairs requirements.

The Government will ensure that all other central agency planning and reporting documentation, including the Strategic Management Cycle and Treasury guidelines on preparing annual reports, contains appropriate references to the legislative and administrative reforms in ethnic affairs. This information will complement material provided in the Resource Kit.

4.3 EVALUATION

This Report, *Building on Our Cultural Diversity*, has been developed through extensive consultation and public input from a broad range of government and non-government agencies. While the Government is confident it is built on the right foundation and sets ethnic affairs in the right direction, it nonetheless acknowledges the need for the process to be closely monitored and evaluated.

Two mechanisms will be used for evaluating the success of the Government's White Paper *Building on Our Cultural Diversity*.

The first mechanism, as noted earlier in this report, will be via the annual Ethnic Affairs Report prepared by the Ethnic Affairs Commission and presented each year to the Minister for Ethnic Affairs for tabling in Parliament. This Report, in presenting an assessment of the progress of the Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000, as well as identifying issues that need to be pursued in the forthcoming year, will provide a regular and publicly accessible vehicle for evaluating the success and status of the Government's ethnic affairs program. These Reports will commence in 1997 and thereafter be presented to Parliament at the end of February each year.

The second and most important evaluation mechanism will occur in the year 2001 and conclude with a substantial report to the Minister for Ethnic Affairs on the implementation of the Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000. This Evaluation will include an assessment of the effectiveness of the EAPS and Ethnic Affairs Agreements processes in fulfilling the Government's reforms and in monitoring the outcomes. The Report will also contain recommendations on the Government's next steps in ethnic affairs.

In addition to these formal evaluation mechanisms, individuals and organisations will be able to assess progress on specific ethnic affairs commitments contained in the Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000 through reviewing agencies' annual reports and in particular the details contained in their EAPS entries. As this mechanism allows progress to be measured over time, it provides a useful, and publicly accessible means of measuring outcomes in ethnic affairs on an agency-by-agency basis.

The combination of an annual Ethnic Affairs Report to Parliament, together with a substantial review during the year 2001 and regular update in agencies' annual reports, should provide effective evaluative procedures and ensure the Government is well placed to make adjustments if and when it becomes necessary.

4.4 TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

What follows is an indicative timetable for the implementation of the ethnic affairs reforms contained in this White Paper.

The timetable proposes that the Annual Reports of 1996-97 contain sections relating to EAPS and Ethnic Affairs Agreements. The first Ethnic Affairs Agreements may be signed at the beginning of 1997.

October 96	Amendments to Ethnic Affairs Commission Act introduced into the NSW Parliament
November 96	Ethnic Affairs Commission Amendment Bill 1996 passed by the Parliament
December 96	White Paper <i>Building on Our Cultural Diversity</i> released by the Government describing the future direction of ethnic affairs in NSW, including the Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000.
January 97	Amended Ethnic Affairs Commission Act proclaimed
January 97	Government issues new regulators requiring annual reporting of Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statements and Ethnic Affairs Agreements
February 97	Premier's Memorandum issued on new Arrangements in Ethnic Affairs, including Annual Report Requirements
February 97	Launch and Distribution of Ethnic Affairs Resource Kit to assist Government agencies in the implementation of the Government's Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000

- March 97** Commission negotiates and signs first Ethnic Affairs Agreements with select agencies
- July-September 97** Commission receives first Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statements from Agencies
- October 97** 1996-97 Annual Reports all contain agencies' Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statements
- February 98** Commission submits the 1997 Ethnic Affairs Report to Minister for Ethnic Affairs for tabling in Parliament
- March 98** Commission negotiates and signs new Ethnic Affairs Agreements for 1998 with select agencies
- 1998 -2000** Repeat as per 1997
- 2001** Report prepared for the Minister for Ethnic Affairs on the Implementation of Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000, including an assessment of the effectiveness of the Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statements and Ethnic Affairs Agreements processes.

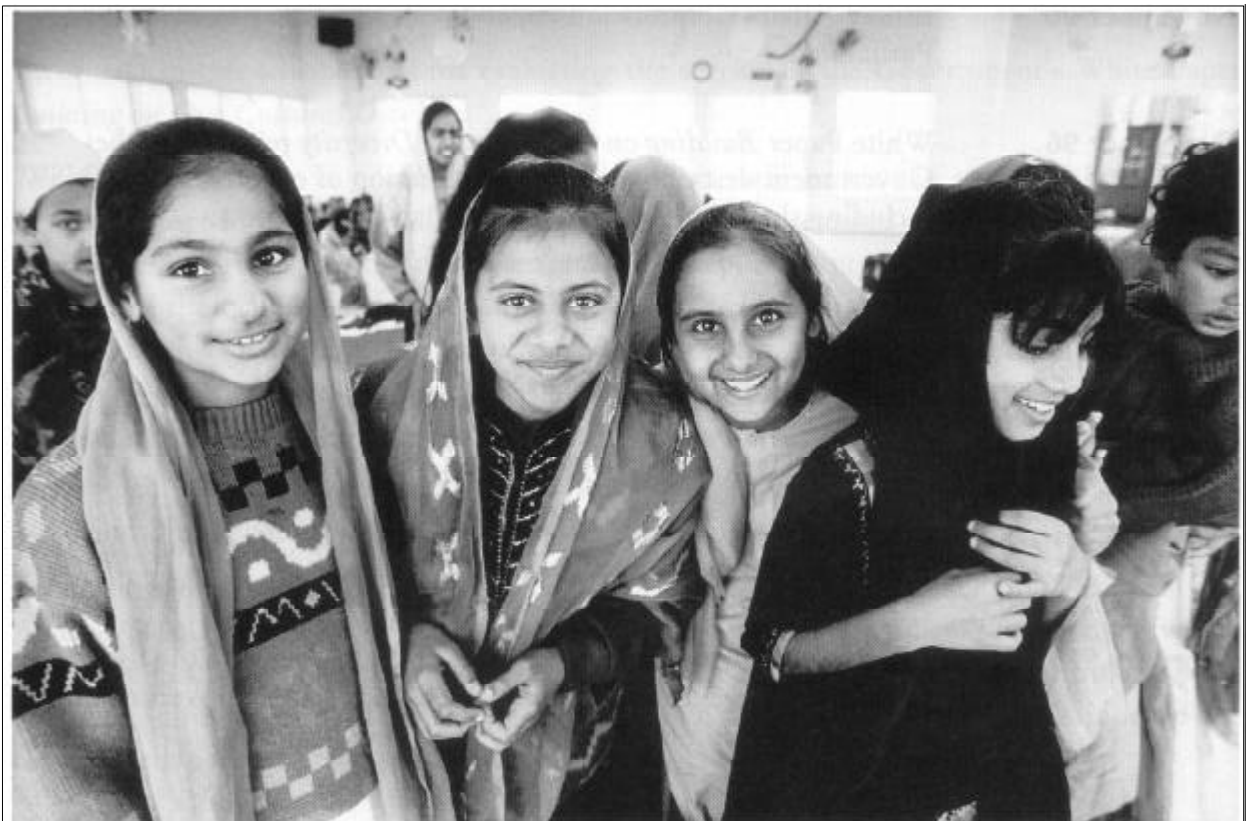


Photo: Karen Mork