

REPORT on PERFORMANCE and OPERATIONS

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OVERVIEW

of 1999 – 2000

The Ethnic Affairs Commission during this year continued to implement strategies to promote social justice, cultural diversity and community harmony.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission has the role of encouraging full participation of persons comprising ethnic groups in the community. To fulfil this role the Commission has implemented a range of successful programs and initiatives.

A greater focus on customer service and quality in the agency was demonstrated by the establishment of a formal structure to oversee the implementation of the Commission's Quality Program. This was supported by the implementation of the Quality Management Action Plan.

The Commission has worked with public and private sector agencies throughout the year to deliver the following objectives:

Social Justice

The Ethnic Affairs Commission advised the Premier and Minister for Citizenship on many important legislative and policy proposals to promote the principles of social justice. Extensive community liaison informed this advice and ensured that the outcomes would promote equity.

The Commission continued to provide language and translation services on a twenty-four hour basis. Liaison with NSW public sector agencies was extended to initiate and develop agreements, which guarantee access to key services for individuals from ethnic communities.

Cultural Diversity

The cultural diversity of the NSW community was supported during the year as the Commission's Grants Program funded a range of activities that exhibited our cultural diversity and enhanced the vibrancy of our multicultural society.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission Literary Award again provided the opportunity to recognise achievement in this important area of personal endeavour. In addition, the annual Ethnic Affairs Commission Award for the Australian Film, Television and Radio School was presented at the graduation ceremony held in April, and the Ethnic Affairs prize in the Dendy short film competition at the Sydney Film Festival was awarded in June.

Community Harmony

The Ethnic Affairs Commission has succeeded over the past twelve months in promoting community harmony through its multicultural marketing, communication and planning programs. The Commission has been successful in promoting the shared values of harmony between communities as the foundation of a united modern Australia.

The most practical example of the outcome of this objective has been the Community Partnership Scheme that targets priority ethnic affairs issues in the community. Key programs under this Scheme included:

The Equal Space Project, Parks Community Network

During 1999-2000, the Commission continued to work closely with the Parks Community Network in the finalisation of the youth and public space project in Stockland Mall, Wetherill Park, which commenced in 1998. This project, also known as the "Equal Space" project brings together young people, retailers, the Stockland Mall management and security staff to work on creative solutions to youth problems.

The Myths and Realities Project, Fairfield Community Resource Centre

During the year, the Commission also continued to monitor the "Myths and Realities" project set up by the Fairfield Community Resources Centre in April 1999. This project aims to provide fairer media coverage of the Fairfield/Cabramatta area, and to sensitise the mainstream and local media to the impact of media coverage on the local area.

A new Community Partnership Scheme project was commenced with an allocation of \$100,000 by the Commission towards the establishment of youth facilities in the Bankstown area, following identification of the need in the NSW Government Action Plan For Youth - Community Issues in Canterbury-Bankstown.

The New South Wales Government, through the Ethnic Affairs Commission, continues to lead the way in responding to cultural diversity and highlighting the benefits of multiculturalism to Australia.

MAJOR

Challenges

Major Challenges

The Premier and Minister for Citizenship introduced the **Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Bill 1999** in Parliament. The Bill stipulates the Government's commitment to multiculturalism and sets out the functions of the new Community Relations Commission, replacing the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW. The Bill is under consideration by the Legislative Assembly.

The Commission was tasked to undertake systematic and wide ranging consultations with people to ensure that the needs and aspirations of the State's culturally diverse community are met. It developed a discussion document which set out a strategy for the new Commission which includes the promotion of the importance of cultural diversity and the establishment of partnerships between community groups, individuals and Government.

To broaden the reach of the consultation process, the Commission's website was utilised to make the document readily available to the public in English and community languages and to enable submissions to be received online. The Commission also assisted in organising meetings across the State.

The consultations undertaken by the Commission in this instance were extensive, comprehensive, and extended to the regional areas of NSW.

The introduction of the Bill required the Commission to review and discuss current priorities and future direction. Some business areas had to put in place contingency plans to effectively manage potential issues.

Like all other Government agencies, the Commission embarked on a **Year 2000 (Y2K) rectification project**. The project was resource intensive and required strategic planning, effective communication, excellent teamwork, effective resource management and total commitment by everyone in the organisation. The major challenge for the Commission was that it had to perform and deliver at the same level as other agencies of much greater resource capabilities. The Commission has two full-time IT staff, however with the support of project teams, the challenge was met successfully.

Other Government compliance requirements were also met during the year:

While undertaking Y2K rectification activities, the Commission also had to update and report on the status of its **IM&T Strategic Plan**. The Commission's plan expired in June 1999 and a new plan had to be developed. The plan was completed in September 1999 and its implementation was deferred until all the Y2K projects were completed.

In response to the NSW Government's commitment to provide services online by 2001, the Commission made a funding submission to *connect.nsw* for **EAC Online Services project**. The project would enable the Commission to have the capacity to accept and confirm bookings for interpreters online; receive and process translation of documents into English and other languages online; make available media reports online; upload all Commission publications in the Internet and host community websites.

The project necessitates, among other things, re-engineering of some business processes and careful planning to effectively manage change. The scarcity of IT skills available in the market and the inability of the Commission to compete against the private sector and much bigger organisations will continue to be a major challenge.

In January 1999, the **Records Act 1999** became legislation. The Act requires all Government agencies to implement a Records Management Program and to comply with Standards by year 2001. The challenge has been and remains to be the ability to build on past and current achievements to meet the requirements of the Act utilising existing resources.

The **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** was introduced by the Federal Government and was to commence on 1 July 2000. Its introduction required all government agencies to embark on a major GST planning. The plan included strategies on systems review and staff training.

The Commission was successful in obtaining \$100,000 enhancement from NSW Treasury to implement the plan. The identification and documentation of processes was a significant achievement of all involved.

ACHIEVEMENTS

According to the Plan

A summary of the achievements of the Commission according to the corporate plan is presented in the table below.

It is important to note that the table reports on the second year of the plan and focuses on what was achieved during the year 1999-2000.

Key Result Area 1: Agency Partnership and Agreement

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUTCOME ACHIEVED
<p>Develop and manage the Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) program.</p>	<p>The EAPS Standards Framework was developed by the Commission and was designed to enable more accurate and consistent assessments of the Ethnic Affairs Priority Statements reports of NSW Government agencies.</p> <p>The Framework was recognised as best practice and the Commission licenced the Commonwealth Government to use the Framework.</p> <p>The EAPS Council which was established to provide strategic guidance to the EAPS program met quarterly during the year. The Council discussed issues arising from reports and liaison with key agencies. Outcomes of each meeting were discussed at the monthly meetings of the Commission.</p> <p>Internal structure within the Commission was established whereby officers were allocated key and non-key agencies. The goal was to ensure appropriate support is provided to the agencies and up-to-date information is exchanged.</p> <p>EAPS administrative systems and processes to manage a sector-wide program were developed, documented and implemented.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUTCOME ACHIEVED
<p>Negotiate and sign the ethnic affairs agreements with selected agencies and evaluate outcomes.</p>	<p>The Commission has entered into a tri-partite agreement with the NSW Attorney-General's Department and the NSW Police to implement the Fairfield Police Court project. The agreement aims to create greater efficiencies in the court system and greater access to services by individuals through the streamlining of the provision of interpreters. Negotiations are underway to modify the Police COPS computer database to improve the administration component of booking interpreters for court appearances at the local police station by police officers.</p> <p>Another agreement entered into by the Commission was with the Department of Community Services. The agreement aims to conduct a pilot in the Inner West region to improve access to language services by clients of the Department. The Commission is taking part in the development of the pilot and guidelines for its operations. The pilot has commenced and will continue through to 2001.</p>
<p>Produce an Annual Ethnic Affairs Report by 28 February each year.</p>	<p>Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement Program reports of 22 key agencies were assessed. In accordance with the Ethnic Affairs Commission Act, the third report on the status of ethnic affairs in New South Wales, entitled Ethnic Affairs Annual Report 1999, was presented to the Premier and Minister for Citizenship on 29 February 2000 for presentation to Parliament.</p>
<p>Manage partnership projects with other agencies.</p>	<p>During the year, the NSW Attorney-General's Department and the Commission entered into an agreement to provide legal training to 450 interpreters. Training would be conducted over three years targeting 150 interpreters each year. Specifications for the delivery of training were finalised and tenders called in early 2000. Training would commence in October 2000.</p> <p>The Commission participated in the Strengthening Communities Program of the Premier's Department. Its participation and involvement in meetings of the Regional Coordination Managers contributed to well-focused discussion of issues and well-targeted community initiatives and projects.</p> <p>A number of inter-government committees established during the year, including the NSW Water Safety Taskforce and Task Force on Market Gardening, had the Commission as a member. In addition, the Commission had involvement in major government initiatives such as the Drug Summit and Problem Gambling.</p>

Key Result Area 2: Community Liaison and Support

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUTCOME ACHIEVED
<p>Implement a community liaison plan to support the Government's ethnic affairs Action Plan 2000 – <i>Building on our Cultural Diversity</i></p>	<p>Community liaison sessions were held in the regions to assist in the development of EAPS in regional agencies, and to assist local government to incorporate cultural diversity issues in local council Social and Community Plans.</p> <p>Regular contact with community groups was achieved through liaison visits by the Commission's liaison officers. Reports on the visits were discussed and included as a permanent agenda item in the monthly meetings of the Commission.</p> <p>A database of community organisations was established to develop liaison networks. The database was upgraded to ensure that relevant information was captured.</p> <p>By 2001, the Commission will be able to provide communities an opportunity to supply feedback on performance by the Commission and other agencies relating to EAPS implementation. This will be made possible by the EAC Online Service project in 2001. The project will also allow the Government to have direct access to structured community feedback.</p>
<p>Implement a rural and regional strategy for the Commission.</p>	<p>As part of the Commission's rural and regional strategy, the number of regional advisory committees had been increased from three to five. The RAC's continued to meet quarterly which allows the Commission to have access to community input to assist in rural and regional planning. The minutes of meetings are discussed at the monthly meetings of the Commission.</p> <p>A panel of regional interpreters and translators was expanded through the promotion of the profession in regional NSW. The Commission, in partnership with NAATI and the Department of Health, conducted language examination in Newcastle and Wollongong. An orientation program was developed to induct those who passed the examination in late 2000.</p> <p>The proposed CRC & Multiculturalism Bill will increase the Commission's presence in rural and regional NSW through increased numbers of committees and devolved staffing structure.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUTCOME ACHIEVED
<p>Manage the Community Development Grants Program efficiently and effectively</p>	<p>The Program guidelines and procedures were amended to incorporate the outcomes of an independent Review of the Program conducted in December 1998. Risk management was incorporated and a mechanism for client feedback through customer surveys was established.</p> <p>The Program was widely publicised in the ethnic communities through advertisements in national, regional and ethnic newspapers. Mailouts were also sent to ensure community groups in rural and regional areas are reached. Information sessions were held in Ashfield, Newcastle and Wollongong.</p> <p>284 applications seeking \$4,734,364.00 were received. 101 organisations were successful and received funding totaling \$849,972, which was according to budget.</p> <p>Outcomes of the customer surveys will be received in the 2000-2001 financial year. The survey result will be compiled and analysed and will be used as a basis for planning the next Program.</p>
<p>Manage and develop the Community Partnership Scheme.</p>	<p>Projects continued to be funded under the Scheme. Qualitative reports on completed projects funded under the Scheme were tabled and discussed at monthly meetings of the Commission.</p> <p>Strategies to emulate successful projects that were completed during the year will be developed during 2001. The projects will become best practice models for future community projects.</p>

Key Result Area 3: Research Advocacy and Community Education

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUTCOME ACHIEVED
<p>Promote community discussion and informed debate on the value of a culturally diverse society and related topics.</p>	<p>A wide-ranging and comprehensive community consultation was conducted to discuss the proposal to replace the Commission with the Community Relations Commission. The consultations were held in Sydney metropolitan areas, regional and rural NSW.</p> <p>The consultation process extended to practically every section of the community to seek community views and attitudes relating to multiculturalism, cultural diversity and community harmony.</p> <p>To assist and increase the reach of the consultation, the Commission's website was updated. This allowed organisations and individuals to communicate their views directly with the Commission and vice versa.</p>
<p>Promote community harmony by fostering activities and public education.</p>	<p>The National Multicultural Marketing Awards and multicultural seminars were successfully held in November 1999.</p> <p>Language skills examinations were held again (after a review by the Government) for Public sector agencies under the Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS). 195 public sector employees passed the examinations in 1999-2000.</p> <p>Language skills examinations were also held for HSC students under the Interpreting and Multicultural Studies of the Department of Education and the Multicultural Entry Scheme of the University of Sydney.</p> <p>The Commission aims to achieve a climate in NSW where it is acknowledged that everyone must be aware of the basic elements and the complementary strengths of other cultures. This will be achieved through the development of cross-cultural training for public and private sector agencies. Plans to deliver this outcome have been developed for implementation in 2001.</p>
<p>Produce data and publications to enhance community appreciation of the value of cultural diversity.</p>	<p>The publication entitled The People of NSW produced in 1998 is a source of authoritative quantitative data on cultural diversity. It was widely distributed and its graphic presentation was uploaded in the Commission's website for quick and easy access by members of the public.</p> <p>Activities and publications of the Commission were made publicly available through the Commission's website.</p>

Key Result Area 4: Language Services

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUTCOME ACHIEVED
<p>Continually improve service to meet customer demand and retain existing customers.</p>	<p>The Commission received funding to implement the EAC Online Services project. One of the aims is to enable the provision of online transactions. This means that the Commission will, among other things, have the capacity to accept and confirm bookings for interpreters online; receive and process translation of documents into English and other languages online and make available ethnic media reports online. This project commenced during the year and is in progress.</p> <p>A formal survey of customers' feedback was commenced and the process of handling customer complaints was reviewed as part of the Commission's Quality Management Program.</p> <p>Upon completion of the above projects next year, the Commission expects to achieve increased awareness of customer needs and of products offered, improved accessibility of service and increased efficiencies.</p>
<p>Increase market share.</p>	<p>The marketing analysis and strategy planned for 1999-2000 has been rescheduled, due to the introduction of the Community Relations Commission and Multiculturalism Bill and the current public sector employment restrictions.</p>
<p>Continue to meet community service obligation.</p>	<p>The commitment of the NSW Government not to disadvantage members of the community due to language difficulties was supported by the Commission through the application of the Exemption Policy. Individuals who are eligible under policy were able to access interpreting and translation services free of charge.</p> <p>The Commission continued to be the main provider of interpreting services to NSW Courts on criminal matters.</p>
<p>Recover all costs on commercial transactions.</p>	<p>The fee structure for interpreting services was reviewed and revised accordingly. This enabled the Commission to identify cost drivers and possible improvements on efficiencies. A new pricing structure introduced fees designed to recover actual costs on recoupable interpreting assignments.</p>
<p>Be recognised by the Australian Quality Council and the business community as a quality committed enterprise.</p>	<p>Year 1999-2000 was the fourth year of the Commission's Quality program. A formal structure was established and team-based approach in planning, decision making and project implementation was achieved.</p> <p>Implementation of Quality will continue in the Commission. An internal assessment of the Commission's performance against the Quality Performance Assessment Matrix will be done next year.</p> <p>Training of staff both in quality and work-related areas will be given priority, as part of the Quality Management Program aimed at increasing staff and organisation competency.</p>

Key Result Area 5: Effective and efficient Management

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUTCOME ACHIEVED
<p>Resource and support a coordinated and integrated approach to policy development and planning for the achievement of the Commission's mission and objectives.</p>	<p>The integration of Quality in the corporate planning process led to the achievement of Commission objectives through well defined plans and programs. The development and documentation of policy guidelines and work procedures was prioritised in the Commission's Quality program which follows the Quality Performance Assessment Matrix.</p> <p>The Commission observed the Strategic Management Cycle Calendar. Its budget process became an integral part of the corporate planning process. This ensured that expenditure reflects and supports Commission priorities.</p> <p>Policies developed during the year complied with Government guidelines and utilised a team-based approach. Examples include policy guidelines in the introduction of the GST, interpreting and translation, Information Management & Technology, Records Management, Grants guidelines and OH&S.</p> <p>The Commission's corporate plan expires in June 2001. Planning for 2001-2004 will commence in February 2001. It is envisaged that the Commission will build on its planning achievements from the previous year and will continue to aim for involvement and input of stakeholders and clients.</p>
<p>Continually improve service to satisfy customer needs within legislative and budgetary constraints.</p>	<p>A number of projects were either commenced or completed aimed at achieving best practice standards in customer service in all work areas of the Commission.</p> <p>These include the EAPS, Community Partnership Scheme, Community Development Grants Program, Records Management Program, Corporate and Strategic Planning, Quality Management, EAC Online Service, among others.</p> <p>The Commission will continue to implement strategies aimed at achieving continuous improvement in customer service by establishing service levels for all business units based on internal and external customer needs. Evaluation of standard of service is part of the Quality program.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUTCOMES
<p>Continue to efficiently and effectively manage the human, financial and physical resources in accordance with all relevant legislation and government policies.</p>	<p>A Purchasing Manual incorporating the effects of the GST was developed and training was provided to all staff.</p> <p>The Commission's Human Resource Management Plan was incorporated in the Operations Plan of the Corporate Services Division. The plan will be further developed to reflect strategies specifically aimed at achieving effective and efficient HR Management.</p>
<p>Integrate and advance information management and technology to significantly improve business operations and service delivery.</p>	<p>The Commission's IM&T Strategic Plan was developed in September 1999. The plan was based on the Government and the Commission's direction and priorities in IM&T. It supports the NSW Government's commitment to provide services online by 2001.</p> <p>Projects that were affected by the Year 2000 problem were prioritised and completed while others were commenced during the year.</p> <p>The EAC Online Services project which will bring significant changes to the operations of the Commission was commenced. The project will enable the provision of online transactions and interactive communications between the Government and the community by establishing a platform to host a community Web site.</p> <p>Relevant policy guidelines were developed with the involvement and input from staff. Appropriate training and briefing sessions were also conducted to ensure awareness and familiarity of the guidelines. Examples include the IM&T Policy Guidelines, E-mail Etiquette, Electronic Document and Directories Management, Use of the Internet and Records Management.</p> <p>The focus of next year will be the implementation of the Commission's IM&T Strategic Plan.</p>
<p>Implement systems that promote and facilitate corporate and personal accountability.</p>	<p>The Commission continued to provide induction training to all new staff which included areas such as the Commission's financial and administrative delegations and compliance with the Public Sector, Ethnic Affairs Commission as well as Interpreters and Translators Codes of Conduct. Training was also provided by the Independent Commission on Corruption to all staff on Ethics and Public Duty Training in October 1999. Further development and documentation of internal procedures relating to over 60 processes affected by the GST occurred and all staff were trained in their implementation.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUTCOME ACHIEVED
<p>Establish systems that promote efficient and effective communication across the Commission.</p>	<p>The Commission promoted and facilitated communication across the organisation through the monthly meetings of the Commission, quarterly meetings of regional advisory committees, weekly meetings of the Executive, regular meetings of each Division and project teams, CEO's monthly meetings with staff, and the establishment of a common directory for easy access to information.</p> <p>Briefing sessions involving all staff were also conducted for major events and projects like the introduction of the CRC & Multiculturalism Bill, progress on the Quality program, introduction of the GST, Y2K Rectification program and EAC Online Services project.</p> <p>Outcomes of meetings were circulated including Commission meetings and the JCC.</p> <p>The Commission recognises that it can readily build on the communication systems and mechanisms in place to develop a formal organisation-wide communication strategy in the future.</p>
<p>Encourage and support personal development, best practice and continuous improvement in products, processes and services.</p>	<p>Quality Management principles are being applied in the implementation of Commission activities. Training has been identified as a priority in the Quality Management Program.</p> <p>The program will deliver a training process that is based on best practice standards.</p>
<p>Promote a safe, positive, productive and harmonious working environment for staff.</p>	<p>Safety standards are maintained in all work areas.</p> <p>All managers, supervisors and employees were provided with OH&S training reinforcing the rights and obligations of employers and employees.</p> <p>The Commission has participated in the Workcover Trial to develop and implement a systematic approach to OH&S in the workplace.</p>