

ethnic affairs agreements

Under the amendments to the Ethnic Affairs Commission Act, the NSW Government has given the Ethnic Affairs Commission the power to initiate and enter into Ethnic Affairs Agreements with government agencies.

Agreements are an important policy tool, allowing the Commission and a partner agency or a group of agencies to work together to resolve specific issues. The aim is to achieve coordinated action by government agencies at a policy, program or service delivery level.

Agreements contain clearly defined objectives and strategies for achieving an identified outcome. They also include performance indicators, the budget and other resources needed to implement the Agreement.

Details of the Agreements signed by the Commission are as follows:

Scholarships for Police Graduates

In its first Ethnic Affairs Agreement between the Ethnic Affairs Commission and the NSW Police Service signed on 10 August 1997, the Ethnic Affairs Commission established two \$2,000 scholarships annually for recent graduates of the Police academy to study policing issues in a multicultural society.

The Academy will select the successful applicants, with the participation of the Commission, and provide support and academic advice to scholarship holders during the research studies.

Use of interpreters in local courts

Under an agreement signed by the Ethnic Affairs Commission, the NSW Police Service and the Attorney General's Department in 1998, NSW Police across the State are able to book interpreters on behalf of NSW local courts without incurring a charge, thereby reducing the risk of court delays whilst an interpreter is arranged.

This Agreement applies to people with limited language skills who appear in court for domestic violence matters, and to defendants in criminal matters.

Modification of the NSW Police's Computerised Operations Policing System (COPS) to facilitate the Agreement is almost complete. The NSW Police Service will review the effectiveness of the Agreement as part of their Language Services Review which is due for completion at the end of 2001.

Language Services in DOCS Area Offices

On 20 January 1998 the Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Department of Community Services (DOCS) signed an Ethnic Affairs Agreement. Under the Agreement DOCS agreed to pilot the systematic use of language services in up to two of its Area Offices. The Department identified the Inner West Area for the pilot.

Under the Agreement the Department agreed to:

- , develop and implement a set of procedures for the use of interpreters and translators, designated bilingual positions, and staff receiving the Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS)
- , establish an identified budget and budget line for interpreter use
- , provide training and guidelines to staff on using the full range of language services
- , promote the language services policy to the Department's clients
- , operate language services in two of its Areas
- , evaluate these services after a six-month period of operation as a model to be implemented in other Areas of the Department.

The Agreement was to be for a twelve-month period, effective from 9 March 1998 and involves three phases:

- , a research phase to investigate the use of language resources in the Department (completed)
- , development and implementation of guidelines for the operation of language services in the pilot Area (in progress)
- , evaluation (scheduled for 30 June 2001).

The commencement and implementation of the project has experienced unexpected delays.

Problem Gambling

An Agreement between the Ethnic Affairs Commission, the Trustees of the Casino Community Benefit Fund, and the Western Sydney Area Health Service was signed on 29 November 2000.

The Trustees of the Casino Community Benefit Fund have provided a \$690,000 grant, to be administered by the Transcultural Mental Health Centre, to assist with the provision of a statewide comprehensive multicultural gambling counseling service for NSW. The objective of the Agreement are as follows:

- , provision of counseling service using qualified bilingual staff
- , provision of a culturally appropriate and skilled problem gambling treatment services in a range of languages not currently provided by any other service provider
- , on-going peer support programs in the two languages provided by full-time counselors
- , specialised training programs for the bilingual counselors working with problem gamblers, their partners and families from non-English speaking backgrounds
- , a free specialist consultation service to mainstream counseling service which complements the quality of care provided by mainstream agencies
- , collection of data to undertake action research on the treatment of problem gambling in ethnic communities.

An evaluation of the outcome will be based on the progress and final reports. Further funding is conditional on a review of the service after 12 months.