

# Arts for a Multicultural Australia 1973 – 1991

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## **An account of Australia Council policies**

### ***Introduction***

#### **Multiculturalism and Public Policy**

The **National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia** (Office of Multicultural Affairs: 1989) addresses multiculturalism in both descriptive and public policy terms, the former defining it as cultural and ethnic diversity, while the latter concerns the way government develops measures 'for managing the consequences of cultural diversity' (p vii). Management is the key term here since governments seek to contain diversity in the interests, as the Agenda puts it, of 'social harmony' (p7). There are three objectives: cultural identity (the expression of individual cultural heritage), social justice (access and equity) and economic efficiency (development and utilisation of skills and talents). Behind the development of **The National Agenda** is government's observation that institutional structures had not been responsive to rapid changes in Australian society. It was therefore necessary for government to intervene in the form of major policy statements and a series of strategic interventions such as access and equity guidelines and requirements and the current process of creating a **National Cultural Development Strategy**.

Administrative reform in the early 1980s, according to Peter Wilenski (1987: pp 167 - 169), falls into three strands each of which can be seen at work in **The National Agenda** and its advocacy agency, the Office of Multicultural Affairs: 1) reforms for a more efficient

administration, 2) reforms for a more democratic administration and 3) reforms for a more equitable administration. Anna Yeatman (1990: p4) has drawn on Wilenski's classifications as a way of examining the government's claims for legitimacy, an undertaking she points out that is not unique to Australia but common among many liberal democratic governments. She has described the context in which such policy and administrative reforms have come about as reflecting 'the emergence of a plurality of social movements, pressure groups and single issue groups which are no longer containable within the old established party system and its reach into types of representation within the bureaucratic modes of decision-making'. That the call for a more efficient administration might well be at odds with an insistence on more democratic, equitable and accessible structures is a concern outside the scope of this paper but which is important to consider since on at least two occasions in the Australia Council, for example, the pressure of budget cuts and devolution of funding, coming in the guise of efficiency in the administration of public resources, has resulted in major impediments in the development and implementation of the multicultural program.

The point is made by Yeatman (1990: pp 6 - 7) that the demand for a more equitable and democratic administration suggests openness, consultation, representative processes and qualitative as opposed to purely quantitative judgements; while a more efficient administration suggests 'predictable lines of authority', strict, centrally-formed guidelines and as she puts it the 'use of people as instruments to realise objectively measured outcomes and efficiencies'. She argues that this latter - the managerialist approach to administration - has come to dominate, in real terms, over the more democratic model although in the rhetoric of public

administration, the two are enmeshed, as they are in **The National Agenda**.

Another related way of reading the notion of management, allied as it is with the expressed desire for social coherence and a unified Australia, is that government believes that cultural diversity needs to be contained, kept within the limits of encouraging tolerance and recognition of diversity, as well as the elimination of barriers to the cultural, economic and political life of the nation. There is an unspoken fear or dread that without proper management there is a risk of disunity and instability in the acknowledgment of diversity. In **The National Agenda**, however, that 'fear' is expressed differently; it is expressed as 'the limits of multiculturalism'.

Whatever the internal tensions evident in the process of developing and implementing a public policy of multiculturalism out of the productive ferment of exchange between the communities, artists and cultural critics and the various instruments of government, all institutions of government, including those established to support and develop culture, are required to adopt the policy and submit themselves to evaluation of its implementation. As such, the Australia Council, the principal agency of policy and funding in the arts (excluding film and broadcasting) has had to absorb government initiatives into an already existing framework of objectives and structures.

### **The Australia Council and Public Policy**

There is little mention in **The National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia** of the arts. Rather, the document uses the term 'culture' into which the arts are subsumed. While this is disappointing from the point of view of recognising the arts as specific forms of cultural production and elaborating on their relationship to ethnicity and multiculturalism, it does allow for a broader definition of culture within the arts than one based exclusively on specific artforms.

The Australia Council was established in 1973

before the administrative reforms defined by Wilenski had taken shape but during the period of community activism and changing discourses of public administration and management. A broader formulation of culture, one that is not based solely on artistic production, lies at the core of the arguments and debates that have characterised the Australia Council's history in relation to what was originally termed 'ethnic arts', then 'multicultural arts' and finally 'arts for a multicultural Australia'.

When the Council was first established, it was immediately organised around a number of artform boards which had a significant degree of autonomy in policy formation and decision-making, although they were required to adopt Council's key objectives (outlined in 1973 in the Interim and Final Reports to the Prime Minister, and the Annual Report). They were and remain:

- to promote a standard of excellence in the arts;
- to widen access, understanding and application of the arts in the community;
- to help establish and express an Australian identity through the arts;
- to promote awareness of Australian culture abroad;
- to uphold and promote the right of artists to freedom in the practice of their arts;
- to help ensure adequate incentive and recognition for creative achievement in the arts

These objectives were embodied in the 1975 Australia Council Act of Parliament.

Council acknowledged the increasing relevance of the arts to social welfare, regional development, education, immigration and so on (1973: p13) but in a revealing passage (1973: p16) it refers to the 'voice of the artist' and the need to achieve a 'proper balance between the

objectives', between accessibility on the one hand and the 'promotion of excellence' on the other.

This dualism, constructed around the binary opposition of the community as a whole (accessibility) on one side and of excellence, and the autonomy or centrality of art and the artists on the other side, has not been absolutely fixed or immutable. Side by side with the artform boards, Council established both the Community Arts Board (CAB) and the Aboriginal Arts Board where questions of ideology, social justice and access and equity issues quite clearly permeated arts practice. It was in the other artform boards that the original conception of their functions and responsibilities created a situation where public policy, outside what was defined as art practice, would be seen as an adjunct, grafted on to their central aims and possibly, therefore, not compatible with them.

The critical moment when the tensions between these two discourses within Council erupted came in the early eighties, precisely during the period described by Wilenski when the three strands of administrative reform were taking place in the area of public policy formation. Council had been severely criticised by the government for its failure to adequately assist migrant and ethnic artists. The Boards' reluctance (there were exceptions) to acknowledge the difficulties faced by these practitioners was linked in large measure, by critics within Council itself, to the notions of 'excellence' and 'professionalism' which were at the heart of their assessment criteria, as well as being linked to the Boards' resistance to affirmative action. Council was a territory marked by competing cultural discourses.

Council operates at 'arms-length' from government yet as a statutory authority it is nevertheless an instrument and agent of government and hence subject to public policy developed outside it. Because of its structure, its original objectives and the fact that these were already largely fixed by the early eighties, major policy initiatives such as multiculturalism were a

challenge to some of the most basic and profoundly held values that had underpinned the operations of the majority of its boards and Council itself. It was no longer a question of the arts having relevance to the community. The Boards were confronted with government demanding policy reforms which in turn were a response to community demands that it (government/the Australia Council) redefine its structures and value systems. Moreover, the 'ethnic' arts communities were challenging the notion of a universal aesthetic and demanding a renegotiation of what constituted 'Australian' art, 'ethnic art' or indeed the very use of the designation 'ethnic'.

The development of what the Council came to describe as 'special programs' or 'priority areas' to implement multicultural policies (along with women, art and working life, youth, and so on) that at a minimum acknowledged diversity and the issues of access and equity, might well be seen as a process of 'grafting'. More productively, it could be seen as the beginning of a far more complex and difficult process of redefining culture within the bureaucratic context of at least one cultural agency in terms of interconnectedness rather than exclusions or oppositions. This suggests that the administrative processes and the debates within Council would have to go well beyond the instrumental.

Preparing a history of 'ethnic policies' as part of a program of research, evaluation and debate is a part of that process.

## ***A history of ethnic arts policies***

### **Preamble**

From the events set out in the chronology below, a number of themes and issues emerge: the use and definition of terms such as 'migrant', 'ethnic' and 'multicultural'; debates over notions of excellence, professionalism, assessment and evaluation; the role of the review process in the history of 'ethnic policies' and the relationship of the boards and Council to

policies and programs in the field of multiculturalism and the arts.

While every effort has been made to give a balanced account of the Boards and their activities and concerns, the brief has placed its emphasis on Council with the result that the Boards are seen almost entirely in relation to the way they were represented, or represented themselves, to Council. Reference is made to individual Board's minutes of meetings where it directly relates to issues raised at Council level. An account and review of the Boards, their policies, programs and expenditures, will be the subject of a separate research project and is outside the scope of this paper.

A history of policies should take into account implementation in the form of programs as well as policy formation, however, once again, the Boards' activities can only be looked at in passing.

There have been significant achievements. By comparison with the majority of federal government film funding and policy agencies, who have only recently begun to come to terms with issues of access and equity in relation to NESB representation, let alone addressing the implications of multiculturalism and cultural production, the Australia Council's work deserves recognition. As early as 1975 there was an acknowledgment that migrant and 'ethnic' communities and their cultures and 'ethnic' artists required support specifically designed to meet their diverse needs. From 1982, Council has had an established policy and programs, the mechanisms and focus of which have changed but their continuation and current expansion demonstrate Council's ongoing commitment. Without at least some reference to the range and development of Council's programs, it would not be possible to acknowledge the work and contribution of the program managers, individual members of staff on the artform Boards who have responded positively to multicultural policy initiatives, and members of the committees, Boards and Council, over a period of fifteen years of almost constant review and sometimes bitter debate.

The Australia Council's Arts for a Multicultural Australia policy has yielded the following:

- representation (at least one) of NESB artists/arts workers on Council and all Boards and Committees;
- the encouragement of discussion and sensitisation about the policy among staff and implementation of an access and equity strategy with regard to staffing;
- appointment of multicultural contact officers within all Council units to assist with applications, provide advice and disseminate information;
- appointment of a program manager to oversee the Arts for a Multicultural Australia policy and programs (previously known as the ethnic arts officer or, multicultural arts officer);
- an information strategy to reach NESB artists and communities with information about the Council's programs and open and extensive review of this strategy by all Boards and units of Council;
- target expenditures in the AMA area which it is hoped will increase each year;
- continuing support of the Australia Council's Multicultural Advisory Committee;
- vital research such as those currently being undertaken on the area of assessment procedures and the notion of excellence, comparative analysis of similar policies and practices in other countries such as Canada and the UK, surveys of the needs and views of NESB artists in specific artforms such as those conducted among visual artists and performing artists (to be discussed later in this history), and the history of the development of 'ethnic policies' at the Australia Council. It is also envisaged that further research will be conducted into the dilemmas of professional/amateur and contemporary/traditional practices, sensitive issues that have been foregrounded over the

years within the Australia Council.

Over the years, particular programs conducted by the Boards and Committees have proved very successful. They include:

- the work of Multicultural Arts Officers (originally called ethnic arts officers) who have provided support to artists and communities, advice and advocacy;
- support for particular artform groups such as Doppio Teatro which is an innovative Italian theatre company dealing with contemporary issues for first and second generation Italians in Australia, or Chandrabhanu's Baratham Dance Company which utilises traditional classical Indian dance in the context of contemporary dance themes and practices in Australia;
- support for individual NESB performing and visual artists, writers, community organisations and researchers, individual and group exhibitions;
- encouragement, acceptance and publication of work in languages other than English and assessment of that work by specialists external to Council as undertaken, in particular, by the Literature Board;
- support for publications on multiculturalism and the arts or works of fiction, poetry and so on;
- support for seminars, workshops and conferences which allow exchange and circulation of information and debates (these events have been organised by individual Boards and by the Australia Council as a whole, an example of the latter being the Cultural Diversity Forum in 1990).
- support for training in the various artforms.

The work within Council on the development and implementation of policies in relation to multiculturalism has spanned, therefore, both programs of support to individual artists, groups

and communities and structural reforms to do with developing appropriate mechanisms and internal structures to support the delivery of these programs. The process by which this has occurred has not been without controversy and intense debate both within Council and in the broader community. This history is an attempt to provide an account of the development of policy and the debates which surrounded it within Council from the inception of Council in 1973 to the present day.

With regard to the terms 'ethnic', 'multicultural' and 'NESB', they have been employed in a manner that reflects usage at the time. For example, early in the history, the term 'ethnic' is used because that is the form of speech current at the time. It was deployed in a form that did not differentiate between the various generations or linguistic backgrounds of the individuals or groups it was referring to. Hence it cannot be replaced by 'NESB'. More importantly, its usage at that time failed to acknowledge that the term 'ethnic' presupposes a centre or mainstream of which 'the ethnic' is, by definition, the other. It would not be appropriate therefore to replace it by 'multicultural', a term which has grown out of a different context and time and which is itself undergoing a substantial critique.

### Summary

While there was some recognition in the mid-seventies of questions to do with migrants and ethnicity, the discussions were couched in terms of trying to circulate information about Council programs to migrant and ethnic communities and balancing the twin planks of the Council's charter: the encouragement of 'excellence' and ensuring wide participation and access by the community in the arts. With the exception of the Crafts Board and the Community Arts Board, in the period from 1973 to 1981, 'excellence' was seen to be the overriding criterion of assessment by the other Boards.

The key event that spurred the Council into debate about migrants and ethnicity in relation to arts funding was the handing down of the **Galbally report: A Review of Post-Arrival**

**Programs and Services for Migrants in 1978.**  
Recommendation 50 of that Report urged:

that the Australia Council develop closer links with ethnic communities and that it reassess its budgetary allocation in order to ensure that ethnic arts receive a more equitable amount.

Requests came from the Minister for Home Affairs, Bob Ellicot, to the Council for an account of its programs, policies, expenditure and projected activities in the light of that report.

The Galbally Report was largely concerned with access and equity issues, but the implications for Council were profound. In its wake there were questions raised, particularly by the Management Committee (headed by Andrea Hull), about the use of terms such as 'excellence' and the prevailing assumptions and policies behind both assessment procedures and the way the Boards and Council represented themselves to the community. In the process, the arguments about affirmative action and positive discrimination were also tackled head on, strongly resisted by the majority of Boards. But real change did not occur until 1982 when, as part of an evaluation on implementation following on from the original Galbally Report, it was found that the Australia Council's response had been inadequate.

By 1982 there had been a redefinition of ethnic arts. One can trace the move, very painful and halting as it may have been, away from equating them with traditional or folk art forms and the desire to preserve them. In the process, the term 'ethnic' was disengaged from 'migrant' in the sense of being equivalent.

Apart from 'excellence', the problem of professionalism comes up in various guises. There was great anxiety expressed by some that they would be asked to support 'amateur' activities. Council was very sensitive about this issue throughout the early to mid-seventies, defending itself against arguments from politicians and others that little of value was being produced in the Australian art scene. The

Council aimed to build up the arts, both in terms of its financial base and its quality, hence a perceived need to avoid association with anything that might be considered 'amateur'. This anxiety came quickly to the surface in the debate about ethnic arts during this period.

In the chronology, the specific opinions of each board from 1980-82 are described. The Literature Board was not in favour of special programs; the Visual Arts Board argued that visual arts 'transcended all ethnic barriers'; the Music and Theatre Boards argued that excellence was the major criterion for assessment. In 1980, only the Community Arts Board and the Crafts Board differed. They suggested that 'excellence' was a relative term and that the Boards' objections to special programs arose from a 'narrow aesthetic base'. Council itself had no clear policy on the issue at this stage aside from the various positions offered by the individual Boards.

The ethnic arts were closely associated with the Community Arts program until 1982. Their minutes and papers suggest a growing awareness and desire to both clarify and develop strategies to deal with problems within Council and the Boards, as well as externally in the provision of support and services to the community and individual artists. Throughout the seventies and early eighties, attempts had been made to circulate information to ethnic communities but there had been problems with the quality of translations, the intermittent nature of the attempts and so on. Ultimately, they were not particularly successful because there was a sense in which there was no continuity in Council's programs and policies.

The influence of individual staff members in the period up to and including the mid-1980s, cannot be underestimated. Rosalie Bower (the first Director of Community Arts) was supportive of initiatives in ethnic arts, trying to raise its profile within Council and encouraging greater contact with ethnic communities and artists. With Antigone Kefala taking on specific responsibility for the area and with Andrea Hull's appointment to the Community Arts

Board, there was a period of consolidation and policy development with the two collaborating closely. Antigone Kefala was not only responsible for policy development and implementation, as was Andrea Hull, she recognised the need for and established the program of ethnic arts officers and she herself toured Australia over a period of several years, working with individual artists, giving them advice and support while at the same time encouraging existing ethnic community groups and organisations to recognise and support cultural activities. This period of consolidation (from 1982-1987) came to an end with the restructure of Council and the abandonment of the Multicultural Arts Committee (MAC).

The first Ethnic Arts Committee, chaired by Evasio Costanzo in 1975, was wound up by Council after only a year of operation. Two early reports, one by Gail Holst in 1976: **A Survey of Support for 'Ethnic Arts' in Australia** and the other by Antigone Kefala in 1977: **A Survey of Funding, Preservation and Research of Ethnic Arts in Australia**, were largely ignored at the time. A more positive use of research was made by the Crafts Board during the late seventies as they were concerned to discover, preserve and encourage the work of migrant and ethnic communities. A committee set up in 1980 to overview Council's response to the Galbally Report met briefly, twice, without instituting any programs or policy initiatives.

But the Institute of Multicultural Affairs Review of 1982, in particular, could not be ignored. It found that Council's response to Recommendation 50: that Council 'develop closer links with ethnic communities and...reassess its budgetary allocation in order to ensure that ethnic arts receive a more equitable amount', had been deficient. The ethnic arts officer at the time, Maria Sbizzirri, (Antigone Kefala was on leave) wrote a report which formed the basis of future activities. The congruence of these developments - Government pressure, significant shifts in public policy and the appointment/growing confidence of staff within the Council - laid the basis for rapid change in the period 1982-1985.

Perhaps the most significant policy initiative during this period was the formation of a Council policy and multicultural program with a designated project officer who reported to Council as well as working with all the Boards. The position of multicultural project officer was moved out of Community Arts and into Special Services whose work had Council-wide application. Also established was an Incentive Fund for Multicultural Arts (There were three other Incentive Funds: Youth Arts, Art in Working Life and Artists in the Community, as well as a separate Touring Fund).

As early as 1974, Rosalie Bower had noted that the Boards, though they stated that they would accept responsibility for community activities in their own field, had not done so adequately as other commitments and priorities always came first. The Incentive Funds allocated to the Boards were a way of gearing the funding as they were drawn from a central Council fund and matched on a dollar for dollar basis. As a table included in the chronology for 1984 indicates, the Incentive Fund for Multicultural Arts resulted in a virtual trebling of the commitment to multicultural arts in the period 1981-1984.

In 1985 a Multicultural Arts Committee (MAC) was established comprising one Council member, nominees from each Board and six external members (arts practitioners or otherwise involved in ethnic arts). Also in 1985, two research projects were approved by Council, one earmarked at \$53,070. Part One was completed (but never published) while Part Two was dropped, finally, in 1988. The whole area of multicultural policy - the Incentive Fund, the MAC and the program itself - was under review by 1987. Antigone Kefala resigned at the end of the year. Alexandra Karakostas-Seda, who had been appointed as a second multicultural project officer, was moved out of the program and so did not replace Kefala. The Incentive Funds came increasingly under fire until in 1988 they were replaced by the notion of a Special Council Program with target expenditures and a fixed sum attached as opposed to a system of matching grants.

The MAC did not meet in 1987 and did not reconvene. The Community Cultural Development Unit (CCDU), established in 1987 and replacing the old Community Arts Board, assumed responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the multicultural program. The position of Program Manager - Multicultural (PMMC) is also located within the CCDU. This has given rise to a certain ambiguity with regard to the Arts for a Multicultural Australia program (its present title) since it is possible to associate the program with community arts rather than all the art forms and it is therefore important to make the distinction that the program covers all the art forms and all units.

Perhaps one of the most striking features of the history of the Australia Council is its organisational structure as the constituent Boards have wide powers to determine their own policy, their assessment procedures and the terms of evaluation. When standardised designation criteria for multicultural projects were introduced in 1990, this was a major breakthrough in that it was possible to make more accurate comparisons on a year to year basis both within the Boards and across Boards, thus facilitating the development of policy and procedures.

In the period 1982-1987 a situation had emerged where Council determined priority areas which in turn were to be integrated by the Boards into their own programs, but the Boards did not necessarily concur with these priorities nor feel comfortable with their implementation. This is revealed in their regular calls for reviews of the multicultural program at every stage of its history, accompanied by expressions of deep concern about its relevance and/or the pressures it placed upon them either in terms of financial expenditure, programs or challenge to their values. Council meanwhile responded to these calls by agreeing to the reviews, with the result that while the program continued to function positively, particularly with regard to the work of the program manager/s, its future was in doubt.

A most revealing moment occurred when Council (minutes 2 - 3 June 1988 item 8.3) appealed to the Boards to develop a sense of 'ownership and responsibility' of the two special programs, (Multicultural and AWL), and in response to the Boards' resistance, the reply that they were never meant to be popular. By contrast, consistent support has come from the Community Arts Board and its successor, the Community Cultural Development Unit (CCDU). Whereas Boards are reluctant to comment on each other's policies and performance, this has not been the case with either the CCDU (throughout the period 1988-1990) or the CAB. On occasion, the CAB had felt it necessary to point out to Council, the Boards and Units (eg 1984 and 1987) that its responsibilities did not encompass the work of individual artists yet it was often stretching the guidelines because the other Boards were not fulfilling their responsibilities.

There are exceptions. The Crafts Board throughout the late seventies and early eighties, was particularly active in the field, initiating research into the needs of ethnic communities, attempting to encourage the practice of both contemporary and traditional crafts and establishing or supporting the position of advisers and coordinators. Alone of the artform boards, it joined with the CAB in tackling the knotty question of what constitutes 'professionalism' and 'excellence', from whose point of view and how it is evaluated. The Theatre Board, in 1984, also deliberated at length over its difficulties in implementing the program, part of which, the Board acknowledged, sprang from its insistence on 'professionalism' as a criterion for subsidy. In attempting a redefinition, it found that the source of the problem was that the Board had not taken sufficient account of problems of infrastructure and language faced by 'ethnic' practitioners; the Board had also failed to adequately recognise skills and qualifications obtained overseas; and they acknowledged that mainstream theatre practice was culturally locked into a model derived from 'Anglo' cultures. However, a less complex and more exclusive definition of 'professional' surfaced

once again in 1987-88.

It would be misleading to suggest that the other Boards resisted the program entirely. This is not the case. The Literature Board sponsored a series of forums for writers, the papers of which were published; they began a program of subsidy for journals publishing the work of NESB writers as well as books and has funded some translations of work into English or languages other than English. Each of the other artform boards, Music, Theatre, the Visual Arts (to a lesser extent) and the Crafts Board also implemented programs of support through fellowships, direct subsidies, assistance with training and so on.

Nonetheless, looking back over the period 1973-1987, the history of 'ethnic policies' is a history of impediments, resistances and setbacks. Certainly the years 1987-89 can be seen as years of hiatus, of a withdrawal of activity, and absorption in policy and internal structures. Council, like virtually all government agencies, was subject to severe budgetary constraints in 1986-87. The mid-1980s also saw an acceleration of debates about the devolution of funding to the state arts ministries. One issue did resurface at the end of 1987 in Council's submission to the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies (CAAIP). An important point raised by Council was the urgent need to broaden the definition of skills beyond trade and formal qualifications as well as the need to give due recognition to qualifications gained overseas in order to facilitate artists migrating to Australia. However, there is a strong underlying argument which harks back to the association of 'migrant' and 'ethnic' arts with folkloric or traditional arts practice and it places great emphasis on the idea of 'cultural maintenance', of preserving traditions and practices, as one of the most important aims of any review of migrant categories in relation to the arts. This argument, or emphasis, is not reflected in policies that were developed subsequently, particularly in the current AMA program.

The Council was restructured during this period (1987-88) and in the process, a number of

changes affecting the multicultural program took place. The abandonment of the MAC meant the designated officer had no base apart from the unit they were located in. The CCDU's acceptance, however, of multiculturalism as a priority program meant that it would have a powerful advocate. The notion of 'multicultural arts' which, like the term 'ethnic arts' was both inaccurate and misleading, was replaced by 'arts for a multicultural Australia'. A project officer, Chris McGuigan, had replaced Antigone Kefala but was only in the position for approximately one year. There was a six month gap between the time of his departure and the arrival of the new Project Manager Multicultural (as the position is now described), Mary Dimech.

CCDU often expressed to Council during 1988 its impatience with the Boards who were responding very slowly and inconsistently to Council requests for new policy statements and programs during this period. At the same time, new government directives on access and equity meant that Council continued to address NESB representation to committees, units and Council itself and developed a grid of appointments which included gender and regional representation as well. The aim was to achieve 23% NESB representation reflecting the composition of the Australian population according to the 1986 Census (and this was broken down into NESB 1 and 2). The appointment of NESB staff was a matter of even greater sensitivity to the Units and has only been instituted in policy terms, according to access and equity guidelines, since 1989.

Between 1989 and 1990, Dimech's reports and recommendations to Council resulted in procedures for the implementation and evaluation of the AMA programs in each Board and Unit being put in place, along with annual reviews of performance. Negotiation over performance indicators and designation criteria are continuing. Extensive consultation between Boards and the Program Manager (PMMC) has been reinstated. The position of program manager, however, has changed from that of the mid-eighties. There are fewer links with

individual artists because the position is located within community arts and because it is also seen to be the responsibility of the artform Boards. The emphasis is on advocacy within Council and in the field. Each unit is also required to have a designated officer responsible for the AMA program although this is still not universally implemented.

A new committee was formed in 1990 to develop policy, provide support to the PMMC, develop strong links between Council and the communities, NESB artists and practitioners, local, state and other relevant government bodies, and across the Boards and Units of Council. ACMAC (Australia Council Multicultural Advisory Committee) was initiated by Sneja Gunew who was appointed to Council in 1989 and became the first chair of ACMAC. The Committee has also been responsible for developing a program of research into multiculturalism and the arts. Indeed, the chair, Sneja Gunew, recently called for a nationally coordinated research program and a national AMA strategy, positioning ACMAC within and outside Council as both a place of debate and source of advice and support on NESB arts practice and policy.

Originally, ACMAC was comprised of NESB representatives from all Boards, Committees and a member of Council who had particular expertise in the area of multiculturalism. However, Council decided to reduce its membership in 1991, due to financial constraints. ACMAC membership is comprised now of NESB representatives from the Boards and a Council representative. It meets twice per year. Council has agreed that at once per year a Forum can be held comprising the original ACMAC membership of representatives from the Committees as well as Boards plus invited experts.

The last three years have been a period of relative stability and expansion. However, ACMAC itself was only established for three years with annual review and this takes it into 1993 only. The Arts for a Multicultural Australia Program is about to enter an extended

period of review. The life of multicultural committees in the past at the Australia Council has been brief. A review has meant their demise. None have had the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It is to be hoped that ACMAC and the current program can continue to develop.

### **Program and Strategies**

Though the chronology and the conclusions drawn from it concentrate on the impediments and persistent problems that the current AMA program and its predecessors have encountered, there have been positive and important developments. Formal recommendations are not possible because of the nature of this history, however they are included as an indicator of fundamental programs that form the core of AMA. These are based on the assumption that Council does indeed support multiculturalism as a priority area.

#### ***1) Program Manager:***

The history of ethnic policies reveals how vital the role of such a person is within Council. Without a designated position, it is impossible for the policy to be properly developed, implemented and evaluated. The manager acts as a conduit for information and critique to be exchanged between Council and the artists, arts organisations, government instrumentalities and community groups. Given the structure of Council whereby each Board has a relatively substantial degree of autonomy in decision making and policy development and where there is little regular exchange between them, the program manager also provides an important link between the Boards and a perspective on all Council activities that is vital to the future of the program and its current implementation. Given the range of the manager's responsibilities - advocacy, administration, policy development and advisory - to both the community, Council, the Boards and Committees and other government bodies - it is not at all clear that one person can fulfil the role adequately. Indeed, between 1984 and the end of 1987, the position was filled by two people.

Another positive development is that the majority of committees and Boards now have at least one designated staff member who is responsible for the AMA program. If each Board and unit within Council has a designated position, then it is possible to create the feeling of 'ownership' of the program that Council has called. It also allows the Program Manager to more adequately monitor and liaise with the units and Boards.

However, in any review of the AMA program, an important area to be examined would be the relative responsibilities and authority of the position itself. For instance, the Program Manager does not have her own budget, although there had been a commitment, in 1987, that this would be the case. This suggests that her authority is limited. There is also continuing debate as to whether the position should be located within Community Arts or the Strategic Development Unit.

## *2) The Committee:*

There have been four multicultural committees. One simply ceased functioning (1980), two were abolished as a result of a review of Council committees (1975-76 and 1985-86) and the fourth, ACMAC is in the middle of its three year term. Despite their vulnerable status, the committees have played a vital role in raising awareness of the needs of NESB artists, of raising the level of debate within Council and providing advice and support to the project officers and across Council. They have formed a bridge with practitioners and the communities and their demise was regarded as a sign of Council's unwillingness to take multiculturalism seriously or consult with the communities.

The present committee, ACMAC, chaired by Sneja Gunew and comprising NESB representatives from the Boards of Council, is continuing, in effect, the work of the MAC, but it is worth reflecting how much more could have been achieved had the committee continued to operate through the restructure of 1987-88. It would have given the program continuity and it would have sent a signal to the

community and artists that Council was indeed committed to the program, instead of the reverse.

In her opening address to the National Working Group for Arts for a Multicultural Australia, Gunew drew attention to the necessity of drawing up a national AMA strategy, the establishment of effective policies Australia-wide, coordinating research and participating in federal government initiatives such as OMA's study into access issues for NESB artists and the development of a National Cultural Strategy. It is only through a strong committee located at the Australia Council and designated solely to the development of such strategies that the Council can take an active, if not leading role in the development of cultural policy and assistance for NESB arts practitioners.

Characteristic of all the committees, despite high membership turnover, members not always being fully briefed on their roles or committed to the program, and lack of adequate resourcing (a major problem for the 1985-86 committee), has been the intensification of the debates - political, aesthetic, cultural and initiation of policy that is vital if the Council is to allow the program to be dynamic.

## *3) The Programs:*

It is not possible to examine any of the programs in depth here. However, a number of activities and programs undertaken since the late seventies appear to have been important either because they provided direct support to practitioners or because they were part of a process to build up infrastructure and a body of policy. Particularly in the area of translation into languages other than English and dissemination of Council information on programs and assessment criteria, there have been criticisms of inconsistency and lack of clarity. Programs have taken place on a number of occasions to improve this area of Council activity and it is therefore included. As suggested above, it has not been possible to provide a consistent evaluation of programs in this history, although there have been a number of programs which

were abandoned because evaluation at the time suggested that they were either conceptually problematic or simply not working. The following however, have been in place, on and off, for many years and appear to have been successful:

- Advocacy, both within Council and with the field: establishing productive relationships at all levels with practitioners, community groups, organisations, relevant government instrumentalities (local, state and federal);
- Programs of support for arts practice across all artform Boards and units, including grants to individuals, groups and organisations, support for publications and translation, research and training;
- Conducting research into multiculturalism and the arts and generating publications which stimulate debate and provide a vital resource for educators, government and the community;
- Funding or co-funding of multicultural/ethnic arts officers and community advisers;
- Translation of information into languages other than English of assessment procedures and criteria, information on programs and wide dissemination of this information.

#### *4) Financial Targets:*

A system of financial or expenditure targets for Boards, Units and Council as a whole proved to be a vital turning point in the development of multicultural policy and programs. Close collaboration between program manager and Boards has proved to be a vital corollary to such expenditure targets as has 'prior monitoring' whether in the form of, for example, consultation, screening of applications or the accepted and standard designation criteria. The form such targets have taken has varied, including a system of matching funds held centrally by Council (Incentive Funds) and the current fixed sum method.

#### *5) Multiculturalism: The Review Process:*

The field of analysis, debate and policy formation in multiculturalism is not static but a dynamic set of interrelated elements subject to complex pressures. Evaluation and renewal is therefore vital, whether that takes the form of re-conceptualising the notion of multiculturalism or re-examining the criteria, definitions and usages of elements of policy. For this to occur, policy within the Australia Council needs to be discussed within a framework that is one of positive engagement.

The review process within Council over the past fifteen years can be described in either of two ways. Either a review has been forced on Council directly by other arms of government, for instance, the Galbally Review (1978) and the Evaluation of Implementation (1982) or as a result of budgetary constraints and criticisms of Council structure: the McKinsey (1976) and McLeay (1986) Reports. The outcomes have been vastly different. In the case of government intervention on access and equity and the provision of services, the program received a significant impetus. The reverse occurred as a result of structural reorganisation so that despite the fact that multiculturalism was a priority program, its committees were abandoned, its programs suffered and Council's commitment was seriously questioned by the field. The AMA program is about to undergo a further review, and ACMAC will reach the end of its term in 1993.

## **A Chronology**

### **1973**

The 1973 Interim Report of the Australian Council for the Arts to the Prime Minister dated 24 May, reiterates the objectives of the Council as set out in the Government Policy Speech of November 1972. The objectives were:

- to promote a standard of excellence in the arts;
- to widen access to, and the understanding

and application of, the arts in the community generally;

- to help establish and express an Australian identity through the arts;
- to promote awareness of Australian culture abroad.

There is no reference to what could be described as ethnic arts or multiculturalism but the question of ethnicity is raised in relation to the establishment of the Aboriginal Arts Board as one of the boards of the Council.

In the Final Report to the Prime Minister, dated November 1973, the original objectives were restated with the following additions:

- to widen opportunities for the practice of the arts;
- to uphold and promote the right of artists to freedom in the practice of their arts;
- to help ensure adequate incentive, opportunity and recognition for creative achievement in the arts.

Once again, the Aboriginal Arts Board is the only acknowledgment of the question of ethnicity.

The first annual report covers the period January-December 1973. It talks about the necessity to give 'first aid' to the arts. It announces the establishment of seven specialist boards: Aboriginal Arts, Crafts, Film and Television, Literature, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts. It points out that all members of the Aboriginal Arts Board were Aboriginal. It also mentions that membership of Council was to be determined by four categories:

- 1) the majority were to be artists; or
- 2) persons closely involved in the arts;
- 3) persons with legal, financial and administrative skills; and

4) senior officials of government.

On page 11, the Annual Report reiterates its responsibility to promote 'excellence' and 'express a national identity'.

In the Chairman's Report, entitled Assessment - Achievements, Deficiencies and Problems, Dr. Coombs notes that 'The Arts are increasingly seen as relevant to social welfare, urban planning, regional development, recreation, *immigration* (my emphasis), tourism, education, international relations, local government, management policies and welfare programs in industry and in trade unions (p 13).'

While on page 16, mention is made of encouraging participation in the arts, it is not in relation to specific groups but in terms of the 'voice of the artist' and the need to achieve a 'proper balance' between the objectives of the Council, accessibility and the 'promotion of excellence'.

At the same time, the Community Arts Fund was established to service multi-arts applications and the 'development of broader community participation'. One means of achieving this was to provide funding to 'non-arts community groups and organisations' linked to Arts Access (taking the arts to hospitals, prisons and so on). But on page 26, mention is made of arguments as to whether the activities of this Fund duplicated that of other Boards and whether it should therefore be absorbed into other funds.

A Community Arts and Development Committee was established within the Council. In its report to Council in July 1973, it describes its first meeting where it was decided, among other things, that the Committee's work 'should relate to projects not clearly within the domain of a particular art form...', 'the need for staff or consultants to play an initiatory role...' and at the end of the list, 'the possibility of the Committee initiating migrant festivals in Wollongong and Melbourne'. Along with its funding for the Polish Folk Arts Group in W.A. and the Dance Board's support for the Kolobok 'ethnic' dance group, it is clear that ethnic arts

were closely linked to migrant communities as a specific category but within traditional and folk art forms.

## 1974

In January 1974, Council held a special meeting to evaluate the activities of Council and the Boards as well as discuss future directions. Discussion, however, concentrated on criticisms levelled at it. These were summarised as: the Council and Boards being 'unduly elitist in their approach to the arts', that they were 'excessively bureaucratic' and that there should be 'close examination' of the relationship between the Council and Boards.

Under the heading of Elitism, it was argued that 'to some extent the arts were elitist in that at their best they were the work of the exceptionally talented and, historically, have been enjoyed by the relatively few.' The problem was achieving a balance between all the objectives of Council, in particular between 'promotion of excellence' and 'the widening participation in and experience of the arts'. Ready access to the arts 'could do much to counter the economic and social influences which kept them as the preserve of the few.'

It was resolved that there should be 'increased support for direct involvement in educative processes and of increased support for community and experimental arts.'

Rosalie Bower, a consultant to the Council, reported in June 1975 that provision for the support of 'Ethnic Arts Groups' within the Community Arts Fund in 1974-75 was set at \$4,600. In addition, the various Boards considered applications from migrant arts groups 'in accordance with their own criteria'. During 1974, the Crafts Board conducted a survey of the craft background of migrants (noted in Council minutes of September 1974).

In August, the Community Media Committee reported to Council (Appendix VIII, p.4 of the Agenda Papers) on 'Assistance to Migrant and Ethnic Groups'. They argued that a 'special

attempt be made to tap the contribution that migrant and ethnic groups might make to film development in Australia'. The director was to approach the government's special consultant on community relations to ascertain whether funds were available to assist migrants for film and television. It was also decided to advertise the Board's activities in migrant publications. While not noted in the minutes, there is discussion, under the category of Audit (in the minutes) of trying to attract migrant audiences to opera.

In the Second Annual Report, 1974, under the heading Migrants, it stated that:

In the grants given in 1974 there seemed to be a lack of support provided to migrant projects. It was felt that this question warranted special attention and a small committee was established...to see what steps were needed - particularly to ensure that migrants were aware of available assistance and knew how to apply for it (p.15).

Further, under Policy Review, it was acknowledged that Council was not 'by and large' meeting its responsibilities with regard to community participation and priority 'should be given...to an expanded community arts program (p 16).'

This reflects an observation made by the Community Arts Committee in its report to Council (Appendix XI, May 1974) that:

...whilst Boards had initially made it clear that they would be responsible for Community projects within their own sphere of interest through their first year...heavy commitment of funds to other areas had preempted the development of this community aspect.

This appeared to scotch the hope expressed in 1973 that these functions could be absorbed into the general functions of the Boards and Council.

In its section of the Annual Report, the CAP argued that its contact with ethnic groups had been extended. Its grants (between \$500 - \$5000) were made to theatre groups,

multinational festivals, arts and crafts exhibitions, etc.

In December, Council agreed, in principle, to the establishment of a **Migrant Committee** (Publicity and Information Committee Report to Council, p 20) so that Council's 'activities should be projected to migrant communities in the broadest sense', 'contacting editors of foreign language newspapers and leaders of ethnic groups.' Approval was given pending Evasio Costanzo's presentation of terms of reference. Mr. Costanzo was a member of Council and would be the first chairman of the committee.

1975

In February 1975, the Council considered and agreed to draft terms of reference of the **Migrant Committee**, submitted by Evasio Costanzo. A decision about membership of the Committee was deferred. The functions agreed upon were, and I quote:

1. To explain the objectives of the Council by seeking the help of editors and leaders of ethnic communities in reaching people, particularly those in non-English speaking communities
2. To produce a monthly newsletter to be sent to editors of ethnic press for publication in their language, preferably accompanied by some editorial advertising.
3. To make available guest speakers on specially desisted days to Clubs and Associations in order to stimulate interest in the arts.
4. To provide professional advice to theatres, bands, choirs and folkloric groups which are operating at amateur level.

In March, Council appointed a Steering Committee, to work with its Publicity and Information Committee, to consider the above

and to give advice on how to achieve them. Membership of the committee was Evasio Costanzo (Convenor), Allan Matheson, John Kaldis (Editor of the Hellenic Herald) and Margaret Helman (Good Neighbour Council of NSW).

In July, the first meeting of the Migrant Steering Committee was held. Staff of Council in attendance were Devon Mills, R. Taylor, Rosalie Bower and David Porter. A paper was circulated (unattributed) which argued that the term 'migrant' was too limiting, that the Aboriginal Arts Board's objectives and functions were a good model for the committee and raised the question of why have a separate ethnic arts board as opposed to each Board of Council reflecting 'the multicultural reality of Australian society'. In the event, the committee felt that Council should develop programs for migrants and specific attention be given to 'ethnic communities including Australian born descendants of migrants' and it urged expansion of its membership to include representatives of various ethnic groups.

The Committee believed that Council programs had redressed, to some extent, what they felt had been a reduction in 'willing participation by minority communities in their own ethnic arts (p 2)' but that a consistent program was needed of both financial assistance and advice. They felt that ethnic festivals, theatre centres and workshops were possible ways forward but they strongly urged the appointment of part-time field officers in Melbourne and Sydney who would specifically encourage arts activities in these communities. They stressed the need for personal communication, a Council newsletter and advertising as ways of reaching minority groups. Finally, it agreed to recommend a name change to Council. It preferred '**Ethnic Arts Committee**' as it more 'appropriately' reflected the Committee's role.

Council, in July, agreed to the name change and adopted, in principle, the recommendations relating both to the appointment of field officers and placing quarterly advertisements in ethnic newspapers regarding the availability of

funds.

Rosalie Bower submitted a report to Council, prepared in June, in which she listed funding decisions of the Community Arts Program which amounted to \$64,800 to that date. She outlined her meetings and contacts in relation to ethnic arts with the Good Neighbour Councils throughout Australia. She noted that 'the national body sought to play a leading role in the development of ethnic arts...as a desirable balance to (their) welfare work', however at a state level, she was concerned about their effectiveness. She felt that in South Australia, for example, their work was excellent, their secretary having studied the Canadian model. She went on to point out that with regard to Council, the meeting in Victoria with the Ethnic Communities Council was critical of it because of its failure to communicate. At all the meetings, Council was urged to assist ethnic artists in the preparation of their applications, to provide support for publications in languages other than English, to ensure ethnic representation on Boards and Council and the appointment of multilingual staff, and to advertise widely in foreign language press.

In August, the Ethnic Arts Committee agreed upon a number of objectives including:

- To encourage and support programs and activities which will enable Australia's cultures to be preserved and developed.
- To promote creative encounters and interchange among all Australian cultural heritages and traditions.
- To encourage and support the creative expression of the migration experience through theatre, film, literature, music, visual arts and dance.
- To encourage, promote and support the education of children of ethnic communities so that they may be aware and proud of their heritage.
- To keep the ethnic communities in Australia

informed of the Council, Boards and Ethnic Arts Committee and to be in a process of constant consultation with them.

They also raised the issue of their relationship with the Community Arts Committee, a matter taken up in a memo from David Porter to Community Arts referring to possible overlap between the two and Community Arts' priorities and policies in regard to ethnic arts activities. Finally, it was felt that 'more intensive research into the needs of ethnic groups would eventually be necessary' and requested Council's research guidelines.

In September, the Committee met again and expressed concern, conveyed later to Council, about the problems of 'ad hoc funding for ethnic arts without a prior assessment of art requirements, special community needs and establishment of priorities' (October Council minutes). Council also noted the committee's concern about fostering 'elitist phenomena and disenchantment of ethnic communities if such unplanned funding continued and the necessity therefore of research in order that 'rational objectives and strategies could be developed'. The Ethnic Arts Committee agreed to work with Community Arts to develop a systematic strategy and criteria for support of ethnic arts and a plan for Community Arts to stimulate policy development in the ethnic arts among major political parties.

Once again, it hoped to expand its membership in order to be more representative and Council agreed to appoint Aly Eyiam of the Good Neighbour Council in Melbourne to the Committee. But in the December Council minutes it is noted that no action had been taken to so invite Mr Eyiam.

In the 1975-76 Annual Report, apart from the Community Arts Program, no other Board specifically mentions migrants or ethnic arts. In its section of the Annual Report, CAP stated that a three month study had been funded to accompany the establishment of the committee mentioned above and noted that:

With recognition of the contribution migrant minorities have made to Australia's cultural life, has come the growing realisation that traditional folk arts should be encouraged to flourish and enrich the lives of Australians as well as migrant communities (p17-18).

It is worth noting that the tone of Costanzo's report to Council on this matter was somewhat different. He points to the urgent need for research in order to develop adequate funding and a set of priorities to assist ethnic artists. He states: 'These people so deprived are those who need most help, yet they won't be able to receive our message because of fears, distrust and alienation' (See Appendix II).

## 1976

In January a working party of Community Arts and Regional Development Program met with the Ethnic Arts Committee. Costanzo's opening remarks covered issues of assimilation and integration and the increasing irrelevance to ethnic communities of traditional crafts. Papers were presented by Michael Liffman on an Ethnic Heritage Program and overseas models were discussed. The working party felt that the Australia Council brochure translations were generally poor and that care should be taken in this regard. They agreed that:

- 1) there should be a research program on ethnic arts and that the Community Arts Program should seek the appointment of field officers to liaise in this project as well as work with the ethnic communities.
- 2) Community Arts Program hoped to raise its commitment to ethnic arts from 5% to 7% of its funding allocation.

They also felt it vital to locate and document people engaged in arts activities, maintain archival records, create resource centres, sponsor films on the migrant experience and educate children to 'embrace ancestral culture'.

In February, Council noted that Margaret Helman had been appointed as adviser to the Community Arts Committee and that the Community Arts Program would be responsible for the administration of the Ethnic Arts Program.

When the Committee met again in March, Antigone Kefala was in attendance. Gail Holst was about to begin her research and discussion followed on the parameters of that research. Her report would be a 'blueprint for action'. It was agreed that it would be widely distributed on completion. Also, the Committee adopted a working definition of 'ethnic arts' as follows:

- 1) 'Ethnic' has the connotation of traditional 'folk' (and naturally does not embrace manifestations of art which belong to classical and modern classical art in other categories of western culture: Raphael and Picasso are not 'ethnic') and;
- 2) 'Ethnic Art contributes a new mainstream of Australian culture, which evolves from all cultural influences in Australia.'

It proposed the establishment of ethnic arts fellowships for 'professional exponents of the ethnic arts' to the value of \$7,000 each for up to one year plus travelling expenses. A report was tabled at the April Council meeting on these decisions.

However, at the April Council meeting, McKinsey and Co. presented their **Study on Devolution, Procedures and Staffing Structure**, commissioned by Council, in which they recommended the scrapping of all committees except Finance and Administration. Council agreed with the recommendation, the only exception being in addition to Finance and Administration, they would keep the Community Arts Committee.

In September 1976, Council received a paper from Dr. Costanzo (Appendix III) requesting that it make a commitment to ethnic arts and

inquiring about the fate of the committee. Council advised him that \$50,000 had been earmarked for ethnic arts activities as part of the Community Arts Central Fund.

In October, the Community Arts Committee presented revised functions and responsibilities to Council, point (c) describing the 'community' and 'special factors such as youth, children, ethnic groups, old people, disadvantaged people, the outback population, special urban and suburban requirements'.

In December 1976, the Community Arts Committee considered devolving responsibility for ethnic arts to the states but deferred a decision until consultation with their Ethnic Arts Adviser.

In the Annual Report of 1975 - 76, no mention is made of the ethnic arts committee. There is discussion of the Council's support for 'amateur arts' in order to 'raise standards' or extend community involvement and that the Community Arts Program had 'uncovered a wealth of community arts interests'. Expansion, however, was 'difficult'.

## 1977

The Community Arts Committee reported to Council in February that it was undertaking a review of policy which included 'ethnic arts'. In reply to a query from Dr. Costanzo about the research reports, it was stated that they would be edited, then submitted to the committee and finally circulated to ethnic organisations and communities.

By September 1977, the Community Arts Program had become a Board, but not without dissent from the Crafts and Aboriginal Arts Boards which wanted these responsibilities to be devolved to the individual boards. But prior to that, in June, Costanzo once again requested information on why no action had been taken to advertise its programs in foreign language newspapers. The CAP subsequently made a commitment to do so.

In December, the Ethnic Arts Report and Policy Statement (which included Gail Holst's research) was tabled at Council and noted.

In its 1976-77 Annual Report, Council noted the establishment of the Community Arts Board and defined it as a 'growth area'. As funding for community arts activities was also the responsibility of individual boards, they made mention of this in their reports but there is little mention of ethnic arts except in the list of grants made for the year.

## 1978

In March 1978, an Ethnic Arts Directory was proposed and \$1,500 set aside by Council for its preparation. The Directory was completed and distributed to Council by its December meeting. Council also noted a very positive response to the Ethnic Arts Policy paper that had been circulated. A copy is attached as Appendix IV.

The newly formed Community Arts Board met for the first time in April under the chairmanship of Dr. Peter Botsman and members included Ted Greenwood (Vic), Paul Barron (W.A.), June Jeremy (NSW), Ken Conway (NT) and Suzanne Roux (SA).

In June, Council continued a process begun in 1977 of extended policy debate on issues such as artistic excellence; whether programs should be devised which 'assist the emergence of a distinctively Australian culture'; whether it was possible to identify such a thing; whether there were 'any peculiarly Australian art forms or even skills - as against a multiplicity of ethnic art forms and skills'; and what was the role of traditional and international art forms?

In August 1978, the Community Arts Board brought to the attention of Council the point that it supported ethnic, folk and traditional work at a community level and it was incumbent upon the other Boards that they support the work of 'professional immigrant artists.' (Agenda Item 5.3, page 2)

It also responded to the policy issues put forward by Council that it did not regard excellence as the sole criterion in evaluating the quality of arts activities. Other criterion that should be considered were named as community need and interest, geographic factors and community groups including ethnic minority groups. 'Ethnic equity' was sought in the 'broad sense but not on a per capita basis'.

On Council, the debate about artistic excellence continued in October among other policy issues and as part of the Council's attempt to lock in a range of policy priorities and evaluative criteria. Each Board by this stage had responded to the June discussion.

In the Annual Report of 1977 - 78, it is noted that the Community Arts Board had special responsibility for particular communities, including ethnic groups and it maintained that as a result of setting up 'a special advisory committee' in 1975, publishing the ethnic affairs directory and through assistance to ethnic groups, that the Australia Council had taken a 'conspicuous lead' in supporting ethnic, traditional and folk arts.

## 1979

In March the Minister for Home Affairs, Bob Ellicot, wrote to the Australia Council requesting that the Council respond not only to the **Galbally Report: A Review of Post Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants (Recommendation 50)** with regular information on programs and expenditure on ethnic arts, but also action taken with regard to migrant women and to identify funds which would be allocated to ethnic arts, ethnic communities and artists of ethnic origin. He stated that he would 'see merit' in the Council establishing a committee, representative of all the Boards to oversee implementation of the **Galbally Report**. Finally, he stated that consideration would now be given to appoint people with 'strong links' to ethnic communities or background in ethnic arts to Boards and to Council and thus sought nominations from Council to this effect.

**Recommendation 50** proposed that: 'the Australia Council develop closer links with ethnic communities and that it reassess its budgetary allocations in order to ensure that ethnic arts receive a more equitable amount'. Galbally also advised that in view of Council's charter to promote excellence and provide opportunities for persons to practice the arts, the term 'ethnic arts' should be interpreted in the broadest sense.

Council responded at its April meeting by requesting that the Community Arts Board prepare a paper defining ethnic arts, and that the question of appointments to the Boards be referred to them for consideration. It also recommended appointment of a consultant to prepare statistics on support of ethnic arts.

In June 1979, a paper by Ros Bower of the Community Arts Board was tabled at Council in which ethnic arts were defined as:

those which in form, style and tradition belong to the distinctive heritage of ethnic minority communities...such arts would be described as folk and traditional arts.

She goes on to observe that the term is often used synonymously with 'immigrant' and that the Ethnic Communities Council limited the term to non-Anglo-Australians. Further, she argued that the Galbally Report was largely concerned with the needs of recent migrants in terms of health, welfare and education rather than cultural needs. As far as the Community Arts Board was concerned, the paper reaffirmed the position that they supported community arts and that the criterion of support was not 'ethnicity' but the 'ethnic, folk or traditional nature of the expertise and its relevance to community interests'. Other Boards 'should have professional responsibilities in their own art forms.' A recommendation was also made that a committee be established to monitor activities in the ethnic arts.

Each Board was asked to respond to the questions raised in the Minister's letter and to advise Council of what projects were being

supported, what new initiatives they would undertake if extra funds were forthcoming and whether they felt this to be outside their responsibility (and why). These responses were tabled at the August Council meeting.

The **Aboriginal Arts Board** (Director, Robert Edwards) argued that ethnic communities should be encouraged as well to seek membership of Council and all Boards with the exception of the Aboriginal Arts Board. They regarded it as inappropriate for them to provide specific grants for ethnic arts nor would they want to be involved in a Committee of overview of the Galbally Recommendation. The **Crafts Board** (Director, David Williams) extensively detailed its support for exhibitions, liaison officers, a national seminar and a survey of ethnic crafts in Melbourne. The Board concluded that while it would develop a five year program of support for ethnic crafts, it would not support 'positive discrimination' as decisions for funding were made on 'artistic merit'.

The **Literature Board** (Michael Costigan) saw 'no need to establish new programs' to support ethnic arts because it was adequately covered in existing programs, it argued. Those programs were listed at the beginning of the paper. They included grants to writers with 'native languages other than English' and that therefore there was no evidence of 'an in built discrimination in favour of the majority Anglo-Saxon culture'. The Board commissioned readers expert in a particular language to read samples of work not written in English and recognised that creative writing 'can be produced in Australia in languages other than English'. However, writers, it felt, should be 'judged in competition with one another' and rejected special programs for particular groups.

The **Music Board** acknowledged that there were no special programs for the promotion of 'ethnic music' and proposed the notion that ethnic communities 'benefit from Music Board assisted programs' as practitioners and audience of 'internationally recognised arts forms' like opera and chamber music. It noted that

composers like Peter Sculthorpe had incorporated other music cultures into their work and that 'ethnic facets' to receive Music Board recognition included teaching methods that evolved in other countries (eg Suzuki and Kodaly). It proposed that as a contribution to further activities it would encourage preservation and practice of ethnic music 'at a professional level'.

The **Theatre Board** regarded its primary responsibility as the professional activity of ongoing theatre companies and as such did not provide grants to such companies for a non-English speaking repertoire. However, it would continue to support one-off projects. 'Ethnicity' should no longer be a criterion for awarding grants, it argued. It would consider applications on their merit, but it would also consider supplementing the Community Arts Board in their ethnic arts program. It urged ethnic communities to 'be taught to discard their cultural cringe'. It concluded, however, that in the area of professional folkloric dance companies, as they had been criticised for their 'lack of authenticity in costume and narrow range of repertoire' that should further funds become available, the Theatre Board would try to consolidate their activities.

Unlike the extensive submissions provided by each of the Boards, the **Visual Arts Board** (Director, Leon Paroissien) presented the following statement:

This matter was discussed by the Board... (which) agreed that the recommendations were reasonable and resolved it would take cognisance of them and implement them where appropriate, providing that they fit into the parameters of application assessment. The Visual Arts Board has consistently given special attention to the needs of migrant communities in relation to international cultural exchanges.

In October, Council discussed the Budget Strategy for 1980-81 and the Finance and Administration Committee's recommendations that priority be given to, among other areas, ethnic arts. The decision was deferred pending

responses from the Boards at the December meeting.

Most restated their earlier positions and papers. The **Crafts Board** endorsed Council's intention of disseminating information through ethnic press, radio and television while the **Community Arts Board** were to offer fellowships and seek the active cooperation of other Boards. They would also publish a second Ethnic Arts Directory and a supplement to Artforce on ethnic arts. The **Music Board**, however, concluded that

rather than foster the activities of various ethnic groups, the Board should endeavour to increase awareness or all Australians of 'multiculturalism' with an ultimate goal of achieving a unique single culture within Australia...(a) blending of diverse cultures...

The 1978-79 Annual Report restated the Council's commitment to excellence and 'enlargement of opportunities' to practice and enjoy the arts. Under the Community Arts Board, expenditure on ethnic arts was put into one category and estimated at \$122,659. No other Board mentions ethnic arts. In this part of the Report, the Community Arts Board is noted as having accepted 'the multicultural nature of the Australian community' in the provision of support for ethnic, folk and traditional arts activities which are described as 'mainly non-professional'. In order to 'raise standards', the Community Arts Board provided a small number of grants to bring teachers from overseas to Australia and to enable artists here to study overseas.

## 1980

Council met on 13-14 March and announced the establishment of a staff committee comprising the General Manager and the Directors of Community Arts and the Crafts Boards to monitor activities and report back to Council. That Committee: Andrea Hull, John Cameron (General Managers) and David Williams, tabled a report.

In a comparison of expenditure, the figures indicated an increase in support. For the financial year 1978-79, expenditure by all Boards on ethnic arts amounted to \$356,505 while in the half year to December 1979, expenditure had reached \$295,110. The report also included a summary of activities by each of the Boards. Council endorsed the Report and it was forwarded to the Minister. Each Board was to retain responsibility for financial support of ethnic arts.

Then on 25 March, as Director of the Management Committee Andrea Hull presented a report on 'ethnic activity' (Management Committee Agenda Item 3.2) in which she noted that Antigone Kefala, since assuming responsibility for this area, had been the focus for ethnic communities who now felt that there was 'some kind of continuity' and that they would be given 'fair and neutral treatment'. She urged the establishment of a larger committee to monitor activities, membership comprising one representative from each Board who, 'however vaguely' is responsible for or sympathetic to the area, plus one Council member to chair meetings, report directly to Council and encourage change. This person 'should not be a Board Chairman as representation of the ethnic arts area should involve the Boards unilaterally'. The brief would be:

To develop a Council policy of support for ethnic artists and arts organisations; to raise awareness...within the Boards and the Council...

The committee was to report on what was happening in the field, disclose interesting activities, develop ties with the Australian Multicultural Institute, ethnic press and radio, seek out other sources of funding etc.

Antigone Kefala prepared a background paper for the Community Arts Board in May. She suggested that while the title 'ethnic, folk and traditional arts' was inaccurate, it should be maintained. She stated that 'ethnic' covered both individual artists and migrant communities and the arts included everything from high art to traditional.

The field had developed greatly including the establishment of SBS, the proliferation of ethnic press, the establishment of Migrant Resource Centres and that there was greater political if not social awareness of the idea of a multicultural society. She proposed a number of strategies for policy initiatives within the Community Arts Board including training (helping artists with overseas qualifications to equip them to work in Australia, etc, grants to groups for the commissioning of new works and large-scale exhibitions. She urged a move away from folk/dance routines. Principally, the Community Arts Board should bring together the states to urge them to support base funding and meetings of artists and organisations to raise awareness and explore possible new directions. Increasingly, she felt, it was not just a matter of funding for the Community Arts Board but of 'tone' in terms of the direction of arts development conveyed to communities, artists and the organisations they dealt with.

In response, the Council endorsed the broadened notion of the term 'ethnic' as described by Antigone in its 22-23 May meeting. It announced the launching of the second Ethnic Arts Directory and of the program of Fellowships for 1980-81. It also noted the Community Arts Board's project, in combination with the Arts Council of Australia, for a pilot program to establish an Ethnic Artists Service.

CAB criteria for the ethnic arts fellowships were that they would be offered to people born overseas of non-English speaking background; who received their art education/training before migrating to Australia; and whose efforts to 'produce work of excellence' and to develop as artists had been hindered by the above obstacles.

The Ethnic Arts Committee met in July. Membership was: Graham Richards (Chairman), Kate Khan (Aboriginal Arts Board), Jane Thynne (Crafts Board), Elaine Lindsay and Irene Stevens (Literature Board), Gavin Tipping (Music Board), Kathryn Lowe (Theatre Board), Nick Waterlow (VAB), Gwen Deamer (Program Services), Antigone Kefala

and Mavis Knight (Community Arts Board).

The preamble to its minutes notes that Council had not adopted or acted upon any of the recommendations of the former Migrant Steering Committee (1974-76) but the Chairman felt that as a result of the Galbally Report, attitudes had changed.

Each Board discussed its assessment criteria, programs and policies. The **Music Board** said that excellence was the main criterion and it was reluctant to support positive discrimination.

The **Visual Arts Board** spoke of visual arts 'transcending all ethnic barriers'. The **Literature Board** felt that apart from concern about the desirability of special programs, there was not enough time or money to develop them. The **Theatre Board** also argued for excellence but might support funding of professionals to work with ethnic groups. By contrast, the **Crafts Board** had taken a pro-active role, supporting traditional and artisan crafts and a number of initiatives in ethnic crafts. It was examining the possibility of funding an ethnic crafts officer and supported the area as a 'major thrust' for additional funds. The **Aboriginal Arts Board** would offer 'moral support' as it was not directly involved in funding matters.

Both the **Community Arts Board** and the **Crafts Board** observed that the other Boards were making decisions from a 'narrow aesthetic base' and that a large proportion of the population in Australia had little access to Australia Council programs. They argued that 'excellence' was a 'very relative term'.

The Committee reached no consensus on evolving an ethnic arts policy.

In October, the Community Arts Board reported that a coordinator had been appointed as a first step towards establishing an Ethnic Artists Service. Their responsibility would be to undertake field work, provide an information and advisory service and research the most appropriate structure and program for such a service.

Also in October, Council noted a report from the Visual Arts Board in which problems were raised in the awarding of fellowships in terms of making a distinction between 'Australian' artists and 'ethnic' artists. The VAB said that unsuccessful applicants might qualify for a community arts grant on the basis of their ethnic background rather than 'on the quality or promise of their work.'

The Management Committee was to look into the issue and its response was tabled in December. They discussed at length, the principles behind 'positive discrimination', United Nations programs in this regard as well as local programs for war veterans, the International Year of Women, Children and the Disabled. It quoted the Galbally report on notions of equal opportunity, encouraging self help and combating prejudice and discrimination. It noted that these principles were contained implicitly in the establishment of the Aboriginal Arts Board. It then discussed multiculturalism and concluded that as a statutory authority, the Australia Council had an obligation to serve all sections of the Australian community and that this does not conflict with its charter to support excellence. It concluded:

The Australia Council should therefore either accept the principle of positive discrimination (or affirmative action) or reject it. If it is to accept the principle, then it must devise methods by which it is to be implemented.

The Management Committee also recommended that it 'determine a policy on positive discrimination in favour of people of non-Anglo/Irish origins who had received their artistic training in other countries and were disadvantaged in practising their art in Australia'.

In relation to the Ethnic Artists Fellowships, Council noted that there was a need to review definitions of 'ethnic artists' and 'ethnic arts'. It supported the view of the Community Arts Board that special attention should be given by each Board to the needs of ethnic artists with a view to encouraging the practice of art

traditions that help preserve people's identity with their cultural past. It asked the Management Committee to consider this in their discussions of support for ethnic artists.

## 1981

The Management Committee continued to consider the question of ethnic arts and in March, Council affirmed these propositions put by the Committee:

1. That all Boards have a responsibility to support ethnic arts and artists of a quality compatible with other Board programs and clients.
2. That the Community Arts Board has a particular responsibility to seek out ethnic artists whose work shows promise and bring them to the attention of other Boards for possible future funding.
3. That Boards be asked to consider the ethnic artists' fellowships as a particular mechanism for achieving this end.

With regard to the Ethnic Arts Committee, Graham Richards, its chairman, retired and the Council deferred any decision of a replacement until the composition of the Council itself was known and the membership of all committees was to be reviewed in any case. In effect, the committee ceased to function.

The Community Arts Board had meantime requested the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs to include in the application form for permanent residency, an item seeking information on the artistic skills and knowledge of migrants. In May, Council congratulated the CAB on its initiative and noted that the Minister had responded 'favourably'.

Management Committee had decided in February to continue the 'general-purpose' definition of ethnic arts as 'the practice of artistic traditions brought to Australia by migrants who do not have an English-speaking

background'. However, it went on to consider questions of more precise definition for the purposes of assessment and statistical coding and urged that regular reviews be made of such codes and definitions. The point of coding and definition, for the Management Committee, was that it would help focus the statistics on support for ethnic arts as opposed to support for migrants.

By July, the Committee had refined its definitions, presented them to Council where they were adopted. The definition of ethnic arts remained the same, but ethnic projects were those where:

- the artist was non-English speaking and born overseas, or
- the project is a form of 'ethnic arts' or concerned issues to do with NESB migrants, or
- the project's audience was principally people of ethnic origin.

In October (Council Agenda Item 3.2), a report was considered by Council which it endorsed and forwarded to the Minister. It outlined support for ethnic arts in the financial year 1980-81, noting in particular the significant increase in the Community Arts Board's expenditure by comparison with the previous year from \$155,640 to \$237,739. The overall result was a modest increase from \$426,038 (1979-80) to \$441,479 (1980-81).

The report spoke at length of Community Arts Board initiatives including the work of the Ethnic Arts Field Officers, the increase in applications and funding for less well established ethnic communities such as the Turks and South Americans, and support services such as the directory and the Multicultural Artists Service. Expenditure by all other Boards, except Music, had fallen. It argued that the decline in support from other Boards was due to particular events like the cessation in funding to the Kolobok Dance Company by the Theatre Board.

In conclusion, the report argued that Council

had responded positively to Recommendation 50 of the Galbally Report by developing closer links with ethnic communities and reassessing budgetary allocations to ensure they were 'a more equitable amount.' The figures it offered were: 1978-79 - \$356,505, 1979-80 - \$426,038, and 1980-81 - \$441,479, bringing total Council expenditure to \$1,224,022 in that period.

Andrea Hull addressed the Council in December giving a history of the Community Arts Board and outlining its 5 priority areas, the first of which was 'The development of a multicultural Australia.' Others included encouraging professional artists to work outside institutions and closer to communities, regional arts, enlisting financial support for the arts from other sources, and supporting the training and development of community arts officers. She concluded that the Community Arts Board had been 'a frontier Board...breaking new ground.'

The Council thanked her for her contribution and noted the report.

## 1982

This was a significant year. Institutions, including the Australia Council, were subject to an evaluation of their implementation of Galbally Report Recommendations by the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs. In June, Council was told that the Institute's evaluation revealed that 'it had not substantially changed its programs or priorities to respond to ethnic communities' cultural needs.' It was noted that though the Boards were responsible for the allocation of funds, it was Council that needed to develop appropriate guidelines and until it did, 'development of a culturally rich and diverse Australian culture will be inhibited' (Agenda Item 4.3).

Maria Sbizzirri, the Ethnic Arts Officer with the Community Arts Board at the time (Antigone Kefala was on leave), prepared a report tabled at Council and considered at the same meeting. 'The evaluation', she stated, 'does not reflect well on the Australia Council'.

Sbizzirri examined Council's activities to date. While the Community Arts Board had established close contact with ethnic communities and a wealth of talent, both amateur and professional had been uncovered, there was still 'untapped wealth' to be reached. Similarly, advertising of Council activities in the ethnic press had not been satisfactory and the quality of translations poor. Ethnic field officers were hampered because their activities had to comply with Community Arts Board policy for community arts officers. Local government was conservative and ethnic arts transcended these boundaries in any case. She noted that no state authority had expressed any interest in the field officers. The ethnic arts fellowships had not received much support from the various Boards but a number of initiatives by the Theatre, Crafts and Literature Board were noted.

Most problematic was the history of committees and ethnic representation on Boards and Council. Sbizzirri noted that the Overview Committee of 1980 had met only once and despite Council acknowledging the Minister's statement that he wished to receive advice on nominations for ethnic representation, since 1979, no appointment had been made.

Her summary stated that the Council was giving 'false encouragement' to ethnic communities since it was putting neither the funding nor the resources into meeting their raised expectations.

Her recommendations were arranged into three options - the '**separatism approach**' i.e. an ethnic arts board or the '**integration approach**' or the **combination of both** with arguments for and against each option. She finally recommended the third option, a combination of both. This involved transferring the Ethnic Arts Officer to Special Services because, she argued, Special Services could implement multicultural policy throughout the Council. Also recommended was that Council earmark funds specifically for ethnic arts.

Council acknowledged that currently only 1% of its arts funding was spent on these activities

and that there was a 'political imperative' on Council to take positive action. In addition it noted that 'excellence is only one of nine responsibilities defined in the Australia Council Act'.

As a result, Council implemented the establishment of Incentive Funds for multicultural activities to the value of \$250,000 divided equally (\$41,600) between all Boards except the Aboriginal Arts Board.

They were available on a matching dollar for dollar basis for all grants that satisfied 'multicultural arts guidelines' and that 'contributed in spirit as well as the letter, to the achievement of our multicultural objectives (Memo from Sbizzirri to Chairman, Directors etc, 9 September)'. The Incentive Funds were to be implemented in the financial year 1982-83. Attached to this chronology is a copy of the multicultural program in its final form as circulated throughout the Council (Appendix V).

By November, Council confirmed the placement of a Multicultural/Ethnic Arts Officer in Special Services to implement the new program. Responsibilities included:

- being a 'resource person' for the whole Council;
- maintaining contact with the field;
- reporting to Council on ethnic arts;
- developing Council policy on ethnic arts.

Council also stated that, within each client services unit, there should be an officer who would have responsibility for ethnic arts, would be identified as a specialist in his/her area and would work closely with the officer in Special Services.

In the 1981-82 Annual Report, Council stated that its activities demonstrated over the years a 'growing recognition of the multicultural nature of Australian society' but it also acknowledged the Institute of Multicultural Affairs' criticism

of its performance. The initiatives described above were put forward as a response to that criticism.

### 1983

Throughout 1983, each of the Boards and Council debated and questioned the Incentive Funds Program. There were in fact four Incentive Funds: Multicultural Arts, Art and Working Life, Youth Arts and Artists in the Community. Each Board was required to report to Council on its expenditure in each of those areas annually and provide proposed allocations for the next financial year. In June, Council reiterated its commitment to the Incentive Funds but it is noted in the minutes that two Council members had recommended discontinuation of both the Multicultural Arts and Art in Working Life Incentive Funds.

Antigone Kefala reported in July that expenditure on multicultural projects in 1982-83 totalled \$668,656 across the six Boards. Important developments within the first six months of the year included community announcements on SBS and community radio stations in languages other than English, the Crafts Board initiative (\$30,000) of supporting the appointment of an adviser to the Crafts Council of Victoria and the Literature Board about to hold (in August) the first meeting of migrant/ethnic writers from throughout Australia to discuss views and work out future programs. Earlier in the year, Irena Lukasik of the Music Board had prepared a substantial paper outlining the Board's position and proposing various strategies of working within the Incentive Fund guidelines with regard to multiculturalism.

One early initiative was under review, the Multicultural Artists' Agency. Kefala reported to the Community Arts Board in May that it was both a 'luxury item', not serving its original purpose and 'very low on community work and involvement'.

In September, Council set in place the Incentive Funds allocations for 1983-84 with the proviso

that if a Board did not expend the full amount set aside the remainder would be distributed to those which had expended in excess of the amount they were initially eligible to claim.

Each Board reported on its view of the funds. The **Crafts Board** made the general observation that implementing the program had precluded it from undertaking other priorities but that it was nonetheless an innovator in the field and would have little difficulty expending its allocation. **Community Arts** likewise reiterated its commitment but did note the increase in workload it necessitated. The **Literature Board** noted that it could not adequately resource the Youth Arts, Art in Working Life and Touring Fund because of their need for extensive field work but put forward an extensive program of support in the multicultural area. The **Music Board** described the imposition of Incentive Funds as 'precipitate and poorly considered'. The **Theatre Board** argued that the funds meant they had to give 'unnecessary attention' to multicultural and youth arts which the Board did not consider to be incentives in any case. The **Visual Arts Board** spoke of supporting the spirit of the Incentive Funds but urged a 'critique and clear thinking'.

By November it was clear that many of the Boards were unhappy. There was dispute over what could be claimed as projects under the funds and whether Boards had under or overspent. The Theatre Board stated to Council in November that Multicultural and Youth Arts were not 'true incentives' since the Board had 'always given significant funding through company grants and project funding to these areas'. It felt that multiculturalism was 'philosophically an extremely unresolved arena' so that funding was 'fraught with the dangers of tokenism and contradiction in standards and funding rationale'.

Council set up a sub-committee to look into the future of the Incentive Funds. It did not meet until 1984.

Nevertheless, Council reiterated its commitment and in the 1982-83 Annual Report maintained

that the existence of the Multicultural Arts Incentive Fund 'lent authority and legitimacy to the area and several Boards increased their funding significantly (p23).' It went on to acknowledge however that the most significant expenditure in the area was the Community Arts Board. Each of the Boards reported their funding in the area and their commitment to Australia's multicultural society but no mention of their objections to the Incentive Funds program are made in the Annual Report.

The effect on expenditure of the Multicultural Arts Incentive Fund was dramatic as Table 1 (below), prepared by Antigone Kefala in 1984, demonstrates.

For the financial year 1983-84, the increase in expenditure continued, but at a slower pace with a total of \$869,000 spent on multicultural arts. All Boards increased their expenditure (except Crafts which fell by approximately 10%). The most significant increases occurred within the Literature Board which almost doubled its commitment and the Music Board where expenditure more than doubled over the previous year.

**Meanjin** (3/1983) published 'Community Arts: A Perspective', an article by Andrea Hull which was in part about the Community Arts Board of the Australia Council. It also canvassed broader questions to do with culture, the critical role of women artists and their work in community arts, and ethnic arts. Hull argued that the new multicultural policy and the Incentive Funds were a beginning, a way in which the Council's Boards were beginning to:

...become responsive to the needs of artists from a non-Anglo-Celtic background, and to the needs of the thirty five percent of our population who are people or the children of people for whom English is not their mother tongue (p321).

(see Table 1 below)

### 1984

A flyer published in October 1984 for distribution to the community outlined the Council's multicultural program with this introductory statement:

The Australia Council recognises the multicultural nature of Australian society, and encourages the

	1981-82	1981-83
Council International Program	7,500	2,500
Community Arts Board	247,937	325,358
Crafts Board	9,475	84,480
Literature Board	18,652	71,295
Music Board		62,658
Theatre Board	101,200	123,350
Visual Arts Board		39,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$384,764</b>	<b>\$709,168</b>

practice and development of art traditions which reflect this diversity... All Boards welcome applications in this area.

The definition of ethnic arts encompassed 'popular, folk or high arts'. Practitioners included: recently migrated NESB artists, those who had been in Australia almost all their lives, artists of NESB descent 'wishing to maintain their ethnic heritage'.

The Australia Council made a submission to the Committee of Review of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). In that review, it criticised the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) as becoming 'increasingly unrepresentative as a medium of national cultural life (Item 2.7)' because of its 'failure to adapt to multicultural Australia'. While Council felt that the ABC should have initiated and conducted multicultural television in the first place, it also felt that a separate SBS had 'protected' the service which might have been destroyed by competition within the ABC for resources. Nevertheless, Council was critical of SBS. It accused the SBS of neither having a systematic philosophy in relation to using the talents of ethnic or Aboriginal Australians (either as artists or administrators), nor did it acquire sufficient local product.

Council's own position on multiculturalism was far from unanimously endorsed within Council or the Boards. Debate over the merits of the program continued throughout the year, alongside the refinement of strategies to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of the Incentive Funds and special programs as a whole. At the February 16-17 meeting of Council, the implementation of Incentive Funds in general was considered (agenda item 4.2. pp 4-5 minutes), arising from the recommendations of a meeting chaired by Peter Wilenski, and attended by Jackie Kott, Andrea Hull, Peter Botsman, Rob Adams, Jon Hawkes and John Cooper. Their recommendations in turn had been slightly modified by the Directors arising from concerns about monitoring the implementation of the funds. They recommended the adoption of the Fixed Sum

Method.

Council agreed and required a global figure to be set aside for the Incentive Funds and programs well in advance of the financial year. Each Board would make submissions and on that basis Council would determine specific dollar allocations to the Boards. The allocations would be held centrally and each application being considered by a Board would be 'reviewed and endorsed as eligible by the responsible special fund officer normally before a grant decision is made'. If there was a dispute regarding eligibility, arbitration would take place at the directors' meeting. All decisions would be reviewed on a quarterly basis. The program/fund officers would be present both at arbitration and review meetings. In the long term, it was hoped that these officers would act more in the role of advisers and consultants to the Boards and as advocates in the field.

The directors reasoned that a shift from the previous system of matching requirements to the fixed sum method would facilitate forward planning and allow for the setting of 'realistic goals', as well as creating greater opportunity for Boards to contribute to 'across art form' objectives each year (Directors' meeting, 3 Feb. 1984). It also meant a move of the 'locus of assessment and review of particular projects away from "in advance" to "after the event" '. On the one hand this had the advantage of giving Boards greater flexibility, but on the other, there would be a weakening of monitoring control. On balance, the directors believed the net advantages outweighed the disadvantages.

At the same time, the Community Arts Board was expressing grave concerns about the support of artists from 'non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds' by other Boards as they felt that funding patterns had 'not significantly changed' since 1980 and 'in no way reflect (ed) the diverse cultural composition of our society' (CAB Board meeting, 22-25 February, 1984, minutes agenda item 7.2 Multicultural Program, p6). Furthermore, the CAB was the 'main source of financial support for these artists', but this

support 'sits uneasily with the assessment criteria developed in relation to the support of community arts activities'. It felt that it was carrying the burden of support that should have been the responsibility of other Boards, but were doing so because those Boards had declined to do so. Indeed, they angrily asserted that this occluded their own primary function (to serve community arts) and made 'a mockery of both Council and Ministerial directives'. The result, they argued, was the continuing marginalisation of non-Anglo-Celtic artists. They concluded by raising the contentious issue of assessment:

...there are non-Anglo-Celtic artists whose output displays qualities that are aesthetically accessible (and acceptable) to the established assessors. For them there are no problems. However, there are also a large number...whose work is rooted in cultural specificity that makes assessment by mainstream artform experts particularly difficult.

The CAB agreed that on this final point, specialist advisers were essential, but on the other matters, they made a number of important decisions and proposed two strategies. They decided to abandon the Ethnic Arts Fellowships and concentrate instead on the role of the CAB within ethnic communities. They hoped to encourage applications decided to increase the number of ethnic arts officers.

Their proposed strategies in relation to the Boards and Council were threefold. Firstly, they would inform Council of their concerns. Secondly, they would monitor the percentage of expenditure in each Board's programs to establish equity on a population basis for non-Anglo-Celtic artists. Finally, they recommended the formation of a **Multicultural Arts Committee** whose membership would be drawn from each of the Boards and representatives of practitioners from the fields and organisers such as ethnic arts officers. In attendance would be the program officers and staff of the Boards when applications were being considered. They saw the committee acting in an advisory capacity to Council, assessing applications, monitoring Council's progress, providing a forum for debate and a higher profile for

multicultural arts both inside and outside Council. It would provide a 'credible base' for the specialist officer to work from. Council agreed to the recommendation that a Committee be formed.

In her quarterly review paper of the Multicultural Incentive Fund, tabled at the Directors' Meeting of 29 May, Antigone Kefala 'expressed concern that many Board directors and staff rarely went into the field to meet people and attend events, which would provide them with a knowledge and understanding of this program' (notes of Director's Meeting, item 5, pp 3-4). The only individual responses to her paper, noted in the minutes, are those of the Visual Arts and the Aboriginal Arts Boards reflecting quite divergent views. The VAB Director 'registered deep concern about the implications of positive discrimination in the grant making process' while Gary Foley of the AAB expressed their interest in being included in the scheme, a new development since the AAB had previously declined and had been specifically exempted from the multicultural program.

Council met in July and considered each of the Boards' reports and proposals for the next financial year under the new scheme. The Boards' reports were prefaced by a brief history and summary of the year just ended. Council observed that there had been some 'good developments' in 1983-84: the publication of a 10 language information brochure about the Council, the involvement of all Boards in the multicultural arts program and an increase of nearly \$200,000 in the amount spent on grants. While it was noted that the Music, Literature and Crafts Boards had taken significant initiatives, 'no Board has yet seriously considered the implications of the program in relation to their own discipline, or related it to their own policies and developments.'

By far the most detailed proposal was put forward by the CAB with an emphasis on doubling the funding for organisers, i.e. Ethnic Arts Officers with new positions being created in South Australia and New South Wales with

the Ethnic Communities Councils, as well as one in Melbourne and the western suburbs of Sydney. They hoped that the other artform Boards would take up the cause of professional development for non-Anglo-Celtic artists.

For the first time, The **Aboriginal Arts Board** proposed two programs - participation of Aboriginal groups in multicultural events like Carnivale and the involvement of ethnic artists in aboriginal community programs - and an expenditure of \$20,000.

The **Crafts Board** reaffirmed its commitment to the Ethnic Crafts Adviser scheme in Victoria, with an expansion into NSW and SA in 1984-85. They wished to extend their program of individual artists applying to the Board and relied heavily on Ethnic Arts Officers to identify and encourage these practitioners.

The **Literature Board** acknowledged the increasing contribution of non-Anglo-Celtic writers and stated that book publication was a Board priority in this area, including non-English language publications. To this end, they felt that *Outrider* was crucial and had grown out of the 1983 conference sponsored by the Board. They committed themselves to several years of subsidy for the magazine.

The **Music Board** expressed some surprise that it had reached its target when at first it had seemed impossible. They had advertised widely and this had netted good results. Because of the 'random distribution' across the various kinds of activities funded by the Board, they felt they would need to re-examine their own goals. They outlined several major initiatives for the coming year and felt these would help set new directions. They included support for Perth's 'Cafe Folklorico', concerts (either a series or one-offs), professional tutors and possibly, ethnic music schools.

The **Visual Arts Board** was still resistant, noting that it had no formal policy on multiculturalism and the visual arts. It recognised 'the seminal and innovative role of migrant peoples' in the visual arts and reiterated its position that

content and innovation were the major priorities in its evaluation of all applications. They acknowledged the small amounts spent but it argued that this nevertheless confirmed their 'commitment'. They would 'encourage' the translation of Board literature and the 'dissemination of information to the multicultural community'- the extent of their affirmative action program.

The **Theatre Board** began by acknowledging that their difficulties in meeting their targets resulted from individual Board members lacking awareness in the field, the small number of applications and the Board's 'strict guidelines about the nature of professional activity', this latter being one of the first acknowledgments at Council of the problematic nature of the definition of 'professional' and 'amateur' as part of the assessment process. It committed itself to developing policy over the coming year and in particular, to support of Sidetrack Theatre Company which it regarded as a model for other companies to follow.

In a 1984 discussion paper, the Theatre Board undertook an analysis of what it termed Multicultural Theatre Projects. Their concerns are worth noting in detail since they reflect some of the issues that arose within other Boards at the time. The paper acknowledged that most applications from ethnic artists or theatre companies were rejected because:

- the artists were not known to the Board;
- little information was available on the quality of their work;
- they did not meet the Board's guidelines of professionalism; and/or
- forms were not filled in correctly or showed lack of experience in budgeting or describing their project.

The Board was afraid that 'the floodgates' would open to a whole new area of activity demanding funding but realised that ethnic artists faced particular problems:

- Their overseas qualifications and experience were not recognised in Australia, nor equivalent with RADA and the RSC, which were recognised.
- Ethnic artists may have difficulty fitting into a different theatrical tradition or established Australian companies.
- Poor English or a strong accent made it difficult for ethnic artists to gain consistent employment and thus become 'professional'.

For 'ethnic audiences', the Board noted problems of language, a cultural tradition and subject matter that might be irrelevant to them, ticket prices that were too high for low income earners and the centralised location of theatres away from the suburbs where they lived.

The paper concluded that it was essential to encourage ethnic artists. They constituted a significant proportion of the population and were 'not being well served by the theatre available at present'. Theatre would reinforce pride in their culture and encourage the young to accept and understand their parents' background. Despite intensive overseas exchange through festivals and travel, little had been done to foster exchange in Australia with local ethnic artists. If this were to occur, the 'mainstream (would be) less dependent on the English stage tradition'.

The Board proposed a series of measures to deal with these problems including:

- relaxation of the requirements of 'professionalism' where small amounts of money were involved;
- development grants for ethnic artists;
- incentives for established companies to present plays about multicultural issues, plays by ethnic artists and to employ ethnic artists;
- appointment of an ethnic artist to the Theatre Board;

- through the Multicultural Arts Officer, ensure that information about the Theatre Board's programs of assistance were disseminated and that information came back to the Board on the 'reputation' of ethnic artists; and
- provide assistance to applicants in preparing their applications to the Board.

Unresolved were the 'Big Policy Questions' which were: should the Board exercise positive discrimination; and should it be prepared to compromise quality, professionalism and innovation to help ethnic theatre groups make a start?

Preparations for the establishment of the Multicultural Arts Committee proceeded slowly. In August, Council appointed Anthony Steel to chair the MAC and requested that the Multicultural Arts Officer and others seek four external members for appointment to the MAC. Then in November, membership was finalised, although not without dissent from some members of Council who queried the necessity for each Board to be represented. Council determined that it was, because '...one of the major purposes of the committee was to create a higher awareness of multicultural arts in the Boards' (Council minutes, November 1984, Agenda Item 3.7, p3).

Membership of the Committee included:

Anthony Steel, James Everett, Jennifer Blocksidge, Silver Harris, Edmund Campion, Phyl Lobl, Suzanne Beal, Alison Carroll, Nancy Caruana, Franco Cavarra, Carol Mavric, Linsey Pollak, Uyen Loewald and Eugenia Hill. It was agreed that membership would be reviewed in 12 months. It was also agreed, that the issue of ethnic representation on the Boards 'should be given closer consideration', but no determination was made in this regard.

## 1985

In 1985, the third edition of the Ethnic Arts Directory was published with information on 1,500 artists, arts groups and organisations throughout Australia and covering literature,

music, crafts, the visual arts, theatre and dance. The monograph, *Writing in Multicultural Australia*, sponsored by the Literature Board and arising from the conferences of multicultural writers held in 1984, was also published.

The Multicultural Arts Committee held its first meeting in February 1985. It met six times over a period of two years. In a report such as this one can only assess the effects of the MAC from its own minutes and that of other arms of Council, the correspondence and other written materials surrounding it and the anecdotal evidence of individuals. On that basis, one would have to conclude that the MAC was a forum where heated and intense debate took place on the broader theoretical issues surrounding multiculturalism and the arts, issues of policy and implementation, community concerns, and the work of artists and the impediments and problems they faced. In 1985, their agenda papers were accompanied by journal articles, newspaper cuttings and other associated reports to provide information to members of the committee and a background to the discussion and development of policy.

The MAC sought to build a bridge between the Council, the Boards and the community. It wanted to develop connections between Council and local and state government institutions and encourage the development of multicultural arts policies at a state level. It wanted to see information about the Council's programs in general and multicultural commitments in particular to be circulated more widely. More specifically, one of the aims of the MAC was to create dialogue between the Boards on the issue of policy and programs in what was then described as multicultural arts policy, a term that was changed in 1988 to Arts for a Multicultural Australia (AMA).

The MAC would 'monitor policies of individual Boards, evaluate their sensitivity and relevance to multicultural arts and, if necessary, make recommendations regarding assessment methods, criteria and distribution of funding.' (MAC minutes 25 Feb. 1985, p2). Its brief also included advising Council on the quality of

multicultural program submissions and making recommendations on notional allocations to Boards; 'monitoring Council progress towards equitable and efficient' support for multicultural arts; and to provide a 'credible base' for the specialist officer working to achieve Council's aims.

Over the two years of its existence, the MAC considered the problems faced by NESB artists: language barriers, lack of recognition of overseas training and the 'less obvious barriers' such as aesthetic values and perceptions of needs used by funding bodies such as the Australia Council in policy development and assessment. They recommended that NESBs be appointed to Boards, Committees, that staff be 'sensitised' to the issues and that Boards designate officers with overall responsibility for multicultural arts. The Music and Theatre Boards had already done so. The question of languages other than English among staff was addressed as well as the need to advertise in them.

The MAC called for better data collection and consistent monitoring and evaluation of programs. With regard to specific areas of need, they alluded to a request by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs that specific strategies be adopted to address the needs of migrant women.

From the outset, the MAC raised the question of assessment criteria and evaluation (Feb. 1985). Their view was that the 'relative concept of "excellence" could be substituted with concepts such as "relevance" or "contemporary art in Australian context" '. This did not eventuate. But the degree of flexibility that could be exercised by Boards was demonstrated in Jon Hawkes' report as Director of the Community Arts Board (MAC minutes 11 June 1985 p3) in which he mentioned that the CAB sometimes 'stretches its guidelines to accommodate projects which are the responsibility of another Board...being either single artform projects or individual artist projects where community participation is not prominent'.

The MAC regularly discussed the work of ethnic arts officers and they instigated and hosted the first national Ethnic Arts Officers meeting. The MAC debated at length both the critical functions these officers played in supporting artists and lobbying ethnic community organisations and local government to both fund and support (through infrastructure) the work of these artists. (e.g. minutes June 1985 p4, Sept 1985 pp8-9, Jan. 1986 pp9-10 etc).

The arts had always been an integral part of many ethnic communities' activities, but the problem within the communities and their organisations was one of profile, status (within a range of other social and political agendas) and access to resources. One of Antigone Kefala's earliest initiatives had been to create and encourage the placement of ethnic arts officers within community organisations in order to address these problems. The question of whether the existing organisations or infrastructure could support them was raised by Deborah Mills at the MAC's September 1985 meeting and was to be raised many times within CCDU, along with debates about changing the role of what became known as the multicultural arts officers (MCAOs). (Their role has largely been changed away from supporting arts activities to a concentration, for the most part, on lobbying and advocacy).

The MAC also considered the question of folk art in relation to multiculturalism at a number of meetings. There was concern that folk art be differentiated from contemporary practice and that the work of ethnic artists should not be equated with 'traditional' or 'folk' art. Although it appeared that these issues had largely been resolved by the late '70s, the Folklife Inquiry had raised them once more at Council.

Each of the Boards was called upon by the MAC to present reports on their existing programs and plans for future activities. The forums that had been conducted by the Literature Board in 1984 (and their consequent publication of the papers in the collection *Writing in Multicultural Australia*), were cited

as one of a number of possible activities for the other Boards to adopt as a model.

In the field of publications and dissemination of information, the MAC supported the preparation of a fourth Ethnic Arts Directory (which was never printed despite the fact that its text had been completed and was ready for publication). The MAC also generated plans for a number of other publications and Council agreed, setting aside \$32,000 in June 1985. The request to Council for funds to support publications had been made by Antigone Kefala and reflected the view of the Multicultural Arts Committee that there was very little published material covering successful projects or providing analysis in the various art forms. It was hoped this commitment would begin the process. Several publications were commissioned and published in 1986 and 1987, including the MATIA series (*Multicultural Arts Today in Australia*) which covered theatre, music and the visual arts and crafts.

Perhaps the most ambitious undertaking for the MAC, arising from its primary aims, was the multicultural arts research project. David Throsby's report: *The Artist in Australia Today: Report of the Committee for Individual Artists Inquiry* (1983) had argued that there was 'no clear evidence of discrimination against artists on the grounds of ethnic origin', with the rider that the involvement of the ethnic community in the arts 'may not yet fully reflect their numerical place in society' (p.113). However, two years later, the Policy and Planning Committee of Council expressed concern at 'the lack of information on multicultural arts to use in the development of policy and to guide Council...' (minutes 24 May 1985 p7).

In June 1985, the MAC observed that the only surveys on ethnic arts had been conducted in 1976 and 1977 by the Community Arts Board (Gail Holst's - *A Survey of Support for 'Ethnic Arts' in Australia* and Antigone Kefala's - *A Survey of Funding, Preservation and Research of Ethnic Arts*). It was felt that the Individual Artist Inquiry had not been able to adequately deal with the issue of ethnicity, Kefala making

the observation, in a memo to Andrea Hull in September 1987, that it had demonstrated that 'ethnic artists are not part of the structures, institutions and organisations from which it drew its sample'. The two projects - the Inquiry and the Multicultural Arts Research - were complementary.

Janis Wilton and her team provided an extensive research brief and proposal to the MAC in September 1985. It was agreed that part of the research would involve a survey, the objectives of which were defined in January 1986. They included:

- to obtain a profile of ethnic artists (including those who do not see themselves as artists) ie training, work, difficulties, market response, what they wanted to see happen, their view of Australian culture, etc.
- to profile groups in the same manner as that for artists
- to profile communities, the place and role of cultural activities, their needs, how they are supported, etc

The MAC argued that the research would assist Council in policy development, help other arts bodies develop policy and help develop a firm understanding of the concept of 'ethnic' and 'multicultural'. They adopted the Council's definition of a **multicultural artist** as an individual of Non-English-speaking background recently migrated to Australia or who has spent most of their life in Australia, who wish to practice as artists or NESB through descent wishing to maintain their ethnic heritage. For groups and organisations it was those with predominantly NESB artists working on single ethnic or multicultural programs.

Within Council in 1985, the Incentive Funds were subject to review. Particular concern was expressed by the Boards at the June 20-21 Council Meeting (minutes, agenda item 7.1.3, pp 18-19) that monitoring mechanisms were 'awkward and time consuming' although there was general support for the idea that 'certain

areas' needed to be given priority by Council for targeted assistance. Published in the Council minutes is John Cooper's reply (representing Special Services): the Incentive Funds were 'never meant to be popular with the Boards'; a reply attesting to continuing strife over the issue. In August, Council agreed to review the Funds, in response to the Boards' objections to prior monitoring. The Multicultural Incentive Fund was scheduled for review by April 1986.

In her paper to the August 29-30 Council Meeting in preparation for the 1985-86 financial year budget, Antigone Kefala noted that 1984-85 had been a year of 'growth and consolidation for the multicultural arts program' with an increase in grants and the appointment of an assistant Multicultural Arts Officer (Alexandra Karakostas-Seda). Activities in the field had grown, particularly in Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

In spite of these positive developments, or because of them, Kefala expressed concern that the Boards' stated allocations for the coming year were very conservative and would mean a reduced commitment to multicultural programs. Council, however, endorsed the Boards' bids because Management Committee had agreed to them and that this was a year of 'limited growth'.

At the same time, Council considered another matter which was to have major repercussions: a proposal by the General Manager (Di Yerbury) to review all Council Committees in an attempt to 'contain administrative costs and staff workloads'. Appended to her paper was an extract from the McKinsey Report (1976) in which the axing of some 10 committees had been recommended. It was partly as a result of the McKinsey Report that the Ethnic Arts Committee had been abolished in 1976. McKinsey's rationale (as quoted in the extract) at the time was that the Council had become 'bloated' and that rationalisation would result in 'substantial savings with minimal sacrifice to the democratic ideal'. Council agreed to the General Manager's request to review the committees.

At the 7-8 November meeting, the first of the review papers for Incentive Funds was tabled at Council. The paper (Agenda Item 7.3) acknowledged that while each of the Boards had been given total responsibility for arts funding at the inception of Council, the arts world was now far more complicated and as such, 'some form of general control by Council, of certain areas of Board expenditures is essential in order to...maintain a broad and balanced program of activities and to ensure that its priorities are translated into funding outcomes'.

The MAC would become one of the first of Council's committees to be reviewed. It had already suffered from a high turnover of membership. Its inaugural chairman, Anthony Steel, resigned after the first meeting. His place in the chair was taken by Di Gribble. Helen Garner, a Literature Board representative, resigned after her first meeting (September 1985). There were other subsequent changes as members' terms on the Boards expired or they resigned. It had been subject to criticism from the outset, but for varying reasons. External members of the MAC, for instance, complained that they were not being listened to by the Board representatives, particularly in the early stages of the MAC's life. At the November Council meeting, the Literature Board recommended that the Multicultural Arts Committee be scrapped because it was 'conflict ridden' whereas the MAC and its activities were strongly supported by others such as Policy and Planning and the Community Arts Board. Council decided to take no immediate action but the MAC was listed as a priority for review at the February 1986 Council meeting.

## 1986

The future of the Multicultural Arts Committee was considered at the Council Meeting of 12-14 February. Discussion, as reflected in the minutes and Agenda Papers, reflected deep divisions. The General Manager, Di Yerbury, introduced the discussion by observing: 'The existence or otherwise of a committee is not identical to the existence or otherwise of programs or functions, but is only one mechanism for delivering those

programs or functions'.

A number of options were presented. One was shifting the committee outside Council and attaching it to a community organisation. In response, it was pointed out that there were now two officers working within Council and the MAC had great symbolic importance. Externalisation would be seen as a withdrawal of support. In the paper accompanying the discussion, the 'pros' and 'cons' were set out (Agenda Item 7.11 pp 11-12). On the one hand, there could be 'possible negative reaction' by the field to shutting down the committee; it was too soon to evaluate its work; it was a first step towards peer assessment in the multicultural arts; it helped in 'consciousness raising' at Board level; and that it offered hope for 'real cultural democracy'. On the other, the MAC was said to be 'dislocated' from the work of the Boards and that it was 'counterproductive' in convincing Boards of the merits of multiculturalism. An alternative model was also proposed: Boards need not be represented at all but MAC members and staff might send representatives to the Boards 'from time to time' to discuss multicultural arts issues.

Accompanying the Agenda Paper were a number of letters in support of the MAC. Sue Beal of the Theatre Board wrote not only in support of retention but praised the high level of intellectual debate within the committee and said that it had been a 'humbling experience' to be part of the work of the committee, particularly when hearing the personal experiences and struggles of the practitioner members. She maintained that four meetings could not be expected to 'produce the goods on Multicultural Arts'. In another, B. Krumins, the Chairman of the South Australian Ethnic Affairs Commission, urged Council to be a 'trendsetter'. A move to abolish the MAC would be seen as 'retrograde and discriminatory unless accompanied by a radical change in the composition of Council's staff and Boards' membership.'

Council postponed a decision on the MAC's future until April to coincide with the

Multicultural Arts Incentive Fund review.

In an unrelated discussion on Council funding of Festivals, the MAC attempted to have inserted a resolution to the effect that the Council would not provide core funding to festivals until they developed multicultural arts policies and included the work of Australian artists from this field. Council noted the resolution but did not append such a requirement, except in the vaguely worded Item (1) which required that programs be 'in harmony with any other relevant Australia Council criteria (to be specified)' (minutes, item 7.8)

A Project Advisory Panel to supervise the Multicultural Arts Research project was established comprising representatives of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) which was to conduct the survey (Clare Dunne, Tony Pensabene - Head of research and Marie Kabala) and representatives of the Australia Council, including staff and MAC members (Alexandra Karakostas-Seda, Jenni Hill, Devon Mills, Linsey Pollak and Janis Wilton). Council approved an allocation of \$53,070 to Policy and Planning for the research. The MAC placed before Council its research proposals in June, proposals developed jointly with AIMA. To be conducted in two stages, the aim was:

- to document the circumstances and characteristics of ethnic artists and arts groups in Australia; and
- to ascertain the views of ethnic communities and artists on their cultural and artistic needs.

The first stage was to be a quantitative analysis using the Ethnic Arts Directory and supplementary lists as a basis; the second stage would involve profiles, in-depth analysis, and interviews with artists and arts groups and organisations. Council approved expenditure of \$53,070 to be drawn from the Policy and Planning budget.

By December 1986, the brief had been severely

modified from a survey conducted by AIMA to a two-part research study, the result of AIMA's demise. The first was to be an analysis of the Ethnic Arts Directory data, the second, a series of articles and case studies.

Michael Cass undertook Part One, the report of which was completed in 1987 but never circulated. Part Two was abandoned, finally, in 1988, with no work having commenced despite lengthy submissions and costings from at least two different groups, one at the University of Melbourne, the other from the Centre for Multicultural Studies at the University of Wollongong. Council's allocation to Part Two of \$39,259 was withdrawn as part of a removal of a total of \$100,000 from Policy and Planning's budget in September 1987. The CCDU reiterated its support for the research in 1988 and the research was allocated \$20,000 by Council for 1988-89 with a revised brief of examining the barriers faced by NESB artists. It also did not proceed.

One reason generally believed to be behind the collapse of the project in the first instance was that AIMA was disbanded in 1986, however, when the Office of Multicultural Affairs was established, it reiterated its support for the project offering \$10,000 towards it from the OMA budget (correspondence from Dr Peter Shergold, OMA, to Max Bourke, AC, 4 August 1987). The reason appears to be more fundamental. The MAC was effectively abolished after its last meeting in December 1986. With the restructure of Council, the departure of Antigone Kefala and Alexandra Karakostas-Seda (MAC project officers) and Andrea Hull (Policy and Planning) by 1988, the engines driving the research were no longer at the Australia Council.

In March 1986, it was significant that, for the first time, Multicultural Arts were listed as an agenda item at the Cultural Directors Meeting (of State and Federal Arts Directors). The Directors concentrated their attention on urging co-ordination of support for multicultural arts in general and development of policies at State level. The future status of the Multicultural Arts

Committee was raised and debated in a paper by Alexandra Karakostas-Seda but no decision or action was taken by the meeting.

The MAC's future was debated at the April meeting of Council. A paper (Agenda Item 8.5.3) prepared by Alexandra Karakostas-Seda and John Cooper was presented summarising the history of multicultural arts at the Australia Council. The paper concluded that an in-depth review of the multicultural incentive fund's effectiveness would be useful but difficult because there was 'a lack of coherent information about the field, lack of statistics, documentation and independent analysis'. An external evaluation would fill this gap (to an extent) along with the research survey advocated by the MAC. They observed that on the one hand some of the Boards were slow in responding (overall expenditure was constantly below 3%) while on the other hand structures and networks in the field were not sufficiently developed either. This meant that multicultural arts was a labour-intensive area that tended to be left behind in favour of less onerous tasks. Management's view was that 'some committee however constituted' needed to exist within Council and that the MAC was playing a valuable role in promoting multicultural arts to the Boards and the field. Management had agreed that it was too early to scale it down or externalise it.

Rather than deciding the fate of the MAC, Council once again postponed consideration of its future, this time until February 1987. In the meantime it was to be retained in its present form and debate about its role and future was to take place within the Boards. Council asked the MAC to develop a 'precise strategy' to implement Council's policy. Despite Management's view and that of the Committee, Council also asked the MAC to consider ways of establishing a body outside Council which would 'mediate multicultural arts to the wider community and...report regularly on these matters to Council' (Council minutes, 16-18 April, Item 8.5.3).

Council took the opposite view with regard to

the Multicultural Arts Incentive Fund. It not only decided to retain the fund, including the controversial procedure of prior monitoring, but also 'expressed satisfaction with its development and progress' since 1983-84.

The investment of \$32,000 for multicultural arts publications began to bear fruit with the publication of two more editions of MATIA. Another was released during the life of the MAC, *Multiculturalism and the Arts* (1986), with an introduction by Belinda Vaughan. The issue of 'High Art and the Pursuit of Excellence' dominates the introduction. She makes the observation that pursuit of the new and different, 'high art' would become 'fossilised and atrophied'. 'Multicultural', in her view, implies 'cross cultural' and when the different cultural modes are 'swept together by cross-currents of interaction a powerful creative force is generated.' Her argument reveals a concern that the 'immense contribution of the overseas-born and the overseas taught' should not be overlooked, suggesting that still, in the mid-eighties, recognition of their work and skills was not fully appreciated or adequately supported. She argues this not on access and equity grounds but on cultural grounds. She reminds the reader that results cannot be measured in the 'success of one artist's career' but in new social patterns that could take two or three generations to become manifest.

The MAC fulfilled Council's request (made in April) that it devise a precise strategy for the implementation of policy and institute debate at Board level. It presented a list of 17 recommendations to Council's September meeting. They pointed out that due to administrative budget cuts and depleted membership, only part of their brief had been dealt with to date.

Notable is the Council's deferral of any consideration of matters regarding the composition or functions of the MAC and its refusal to endorse Recommendation 1 (perhaps the most controversial of the recommendations) which called for Board, Council and staff appointments to reflect the 'current

composition of the Australian population (30% of which is of non-English speaking background)' and that 'those selected should understand and be committed to multiculturalism'. Council noted the recommendation. It referred to management issues relating to the sensitisation of staff to multiculturalism and the designation of project officers. These were the recommendations that directly reflected the Access and Equity guidelines announced by the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs in May 1986.

Events overtook Council as they had in 1982. The Federal Government had instituted its Review of Migrant and Multicultural Services early in 1986, chaired by James Jupp. The Review considered implementation of the recommendations of the Galbally Report and its follow-up evaluation. By late September, the Council was required by the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (Chris Hurford), through the Minister for the Arts (Barry Cohen), to prepare an action plan for the implementation of the government's Access and Equity policies with regard to the 'delivery of federal government services and programs to migrants'. Chris Hurford's letter to Barry Cohen stated that no additional resources would be available to put in place the action plans so they would require some 'reassessment of priorities and redirection of resources'.

While this intervention was a challenge to the Council on precisely those recommendations which it had either deferred or noted from the MAC, the MAC itself was suffering from other pressures. As a cost cutting measure, interstate membership of the MAC was discouraged. Kefala described it as 'Sydnification' (Memo to Di Yerbury, 12 November, 1986). Kefala also pointed out that more than half of the MAC were new members and Sue Beal (proposed as the new Chair) was the only one to have been to virtually all meetings since the MAC's inception.

In the minutes of the December meeting, committee members express the concerns of people in the field about the rumours regarding

the Council's restructure and devolution of funding to the states and the damaging effect these changes might have on Aborigines and ethnic communities. The Council had given no commitment to the MAC regarding its continuation, nonetheless the MAC responded to Council's request that it develop, by February 1987, a precise strategy to implement Council's policy and initiate debate with the Boards on their future role.

In response to Council's suggestion that rather than remaining at Council, the MAC might be devolved and attached to an external organisation, the MAC replied that there was no national organisation to which the MAC could be attached and that in any case, the MAC was integral to the Council's role and responsibilities (Dec. 1986 minutes p4).

The MAC suffered also because the Boards were not unanimous in their support. The Literature Board had conveyed to Council in 1985 its view that the MAC should be scrapped because it was 'conflict ridden' whereas, by contrast, Policy and Planning and the CAB were supportive of the MAC.

The MAC met in December 1986 and scheduled its next meeting for July 1987 but it did not take place. The MAC did not meet again despite lobbying from the field, nor was it developed. When the restructure of the Australia Council was completed by the end of 1987, no attempts were made by Council to resuscitate it. The position of the multicultural project manager was moved from SDU to the newly formed CCDU which, from the outset, listed multicultural arts as one of its priority areas of responsibility.

A committee was not put in place again until 1990- ACMAC -and it has been established for three years with annual review. While this ensures its survival until 1993, the history of ethnic/multicultural arts committees at Council suggests that its future cannot be assumed since none of the multicultural arts committees has had the functions and responsibilities of the artform committees which have survived in one

form or another since the inception of the Australia Council. The MAC, in its time, may have suffered from numerous difficulties and the Boards' view of its activities may not have been unanimous, but it performed several vital functions, initiating research and national meetings which drew together bureaucrats, practitioners and arts officers in the field, engaged in extensive debate on the issues of multiculturalism ranging from cultural theory to access and equity and provided support-for the community and Council-wide activities and responsibilities of the project officers.

## 1987

The Council had experienced budgetary cutbacks and severe restraint in 1986. 1987 saw a major restructuring of Council. As a result, when the scheduled review of the MAC was tabled at Council in February, it was deferred yet again, pending an overall organisational review. Nevertheless, Council requested that the MAC report to it on: traditional folk activity, community activity and professional activity (concentrating on ensuring that arts support programs avoided ethnic bias).

No hint of prevarication appears in the Annual Report 1986-87. On the contrary, Council lists the activities supported by the Boards including the Multicultural Theatre Forums in Adelaide and Melbourne, special programs devised by the Music Board, the MATIA publications and the opening of the Brisbane Ethnic Music and Arts Centre. It describes the first meeting in four years of all ethnic arts officers and some multicultural arts administrators from around Australia, as an 'important event' which had resulted in recommendations for the further development of the area. The Boards themselves only make passing reference to multiculturalism and the Incentive Funds in their reports, most noting a decline in expenditure, with the exception of the Community Arts Board which exceeded its target.

Further results of the publications program initiated by the MAC can be seen in 1987 with the publication of the MATIA (Multicultural

Arts Today in Australia) series. This series of booklets documented the work of individual NESB artists and groups in music, the crafts, theatre and the visual arts across Australia.

The Review by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs conducted in early 1986 had reported favourably on Council's activities. Their report, **Don't Settle for Less**, contained a description and analysis of the multicultural arts program (Items 13.57-13.62) praising Council's initiatives. In particular, they felt that the Multicultural Arts Committee had been an important step forward at both Board and Council level, and that it would not only help Council develop a higher profile, but would ensure it was more equitable and efficient. They concluded:

...the Australia Council has made some progress in broadening the base of multicultural arts in terms of funding and of its recognition as an element of all art forms. It is hoped that the Council Boards will strengthen their commitment to multicultural arts by substantially raising the level of their allocation towards a more equitable share of its total resources' (**Don't Settle for Less**, Report of the Committee for Stage 1 of the Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services, Dept. of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, item 13.62, p292).

Despite this, and the Report's praise of the work and role of the MAC, the MAC was not revived. Instead, the multicultural arts program was moved out of Special Services and into the newly-formed Community Cultural Development Unit which replaced the Community Arts Board from April 1987. Andrea Hull (Policy and Planning), Antigone Kefala and Alexandra Karakostas-Seda (Multicultural Arts Officers) proposed that a specialist multicultural arts panel (with adequate support services) be established within the new Unit in the hope that it would 'overcome many of the problems that the program has experienced so far' and provide a base and focus for the program. The proposal did not succeed.

The restructure of Council resulted in the abolition of Boards and Units or their

consolidation into larger groupings. Dance, Music and Theatre were amalgamated into the Performing Arts Board. Visual Arts and Crafts were amalgamated. The Community Arts Board was replaced by the Community Cultural Development Unit which had a Committee rather than a Board to report to.

In the middle of this restructure it was reported to Council that though the Aboriginal Arts Board had allocated \$10,000 towards multicultural activities, the program had not proceeded.

The changes appeared to create confusion and uncertainty. Jon Hawkes sent a detailed memo (22 July 1987) to both the Chairman (Donald Horne) and General Manager (Max Bourke) seeking clarification of an apparent change in Council's handling of the Incentive Funds. Council appeared to be moving away from its established procedures of requiring Boards to achieve their targets and prior monitoring by the Incentive Funds officer. Hawkes felt a 'softening' would make assessment of Boards' performance difficult since there would be no quantitative benchmark to compare with. Bourke acknowledged there was a misunderstanding (memo to Board Directors, CCDU Director, Program/Project Staff, re Art and Working Life and Multicultural Arts, 9 September, 1987). He reaffirmed a commitment to target expenditures which in turn would have to be certified by the Priority Area Officer and would be reviewed at the end of the financial year.

However, a measure of the extent to which the multicultural arts program was to change can be discerned from the differences between the summary of duty statements prepared by Kefala and Karakostas-Seda in June 1987, and the duty statement prepared for the new position of program manager within the CCDU. While there are similarities, the new duties do not mention work with the staff of the Boards, one of the major activities of the multicultural arts officers. The only relationship with the Boards was by implication in the form of analysis and evaluation, provided to Council, of the 'efficacy

of its policy and activities' and determining 'whether (Council's) commitment to multicultural arts is reflected in the policies and activities *of its component parts* (my emphasis)' (Program Manager - CLAD 9 - Multicultural Duty Statement, June 1987)

A meeting of Ethnic Arts Officers (15-16 June) was informed of the way the new CCDU would function and was assured by Jon Hawkes (the CAB director) that the multicultural program would have direct access to funding, its own budget for projects, ethnic arts officer positions, training, promotion and publications (minutes, tabled at Community Cultural Development Committee meeting II, 10 November, 1987 agenda Item 9.3). This did not eventuate.

Council had defined the CCDU's program (June 1987, agenda item 7.2) as a combination of responsibility for: 1. 'Community Specific Programs', including multicultural arts, women, youth, country arts and art and working life); and 2. 'Stimulation of Institutions' i.e. developing the support base for community activity through state and local government, the education system, migrant resource centres and ethnic communities councils, the CWA, trade unions, libraries, etc.

The Unit was to advise Council on 'sectors in need of affirmative action', the development and implementation of programs, the prioritisation and application of resources and the monitoring and evaluation of results. CCDU effectively had carriage of council-wide programs as well as its own particular responsibilities, formalising a role the CAB had previously undertaken.

At its December meeting (its second), the CCDC agreed to almost all the Ethnic Arts Officer's recommendations including that it 'enshrine' multicultural policies in its charter, support research in the area and further the appointment of NESB representatives to all areas of Council including the artform Boards including staff. Karakostas-Seda suggested that these recommendations could be considered a possible framework, a basis for action within the

multicultural program.

At both the November and December meetings of the newly-formed CCDU/C the nature and functions of the multicultural arts program were debated. After some confusion, it was established that the Multicultural Incentive Fund would continue to operate. Kefala recommended that the CCDU continue to support Multicultural Arts Research and this was accepted. Karakostas-Seda's paper on the Multicultural Program expressed the hope that the CCDU would enable an expansion of activities and programs and outlined its broad objectives:

- increase access to the resources of arts funding bodies and organisations by ethnic artists and groups;
- increase participation of ethnic artists and groups in arts policy and decision making;
- develop resources and support structures;
- stimulate debate on aspects of theory and practice of cultural development in a multicultural society.

She also urged, now that the restructure of Council was complete, that the paper drawn up by the MAC in 1986 on Access and Equity be endorsed by the CCDC and used as a basis for an action plan within Council.

The Committee agreed to proceed, in association with the Strategic Development Division, with the following rider: 'that the words multicultural, immigrant and ethnic be used thoughtfully and accurately'.

Also in December, Council considered and endorsed a submission prepared by Suzanne Davies, for the Strategic Development Division, to the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies (CAAIP). In its account of the Council's commitment to multicultural arts, it describes its previous submissions, the work of the old Community Arts Board, the appointment of a multicultural arts officer and

the establishment of the MAC. It does not acknowledge that the MAC was now defunct.

Council, in the submission, supported the 'importation of specific and identifiable skills' in short supply noting that these would fall into the Independent and Concessional category with regard to the arts but argued that immigration was important for wider purposes, to promote a more creatively dynamic society through a 'true mix of intellectual traditions, European and Asian' as well as in the interests of cultural diversity. More specifically, Council urged CAAIP to broaden the definition of skills beyond trade and formal credentials as these often failed to recognise the skills existing within other cultural traditions. If these 3 were recognised, it would assist in the development of industries complementary to the arts, in research and development, design and in the drive for exports. It concluded that 'cultural maintenance' should be a major aim of the immigration program. Populations age, it argued, and to ensure transmission of traditions, it was necessary to 'top up' cultural and artistic contributors to ensure growth and that standards were maintained.

After many years as the multicultural arts officer, Antigone Kefala resigned and left the Australia Council. Alexandra Karakostas-Seda was not appointed as her successor but moved across to another part of the Council.

## 1988

In February, Council considered a report from the newly-formed CCDU that addressed its principal program areas (eg training, advocacy, and multicultural arts) as well as debating ways of involving the Boards in these programs. CCDU also reported to Council on the National Conference on Multicultural Arts and the positive involvement of the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

However, at the same meeting, the Chairman of the Performing Arts Board, Anthony Steel, requested that Council (agenda item 8.13, 4-5 February 1988) discuss the possibility of

abandoning the current incentive funds mechanism to be replaced with another yet to be determined. Council agreed that the prior monitoring mechanism of the funds be reviewed by June 1988.

The new program manager multicultural arts Chris McGuigan, prepared a discussion paper for the CCDU in which he 'sought to commence discussion on what the objectives of the multicultural program should be and what the processes should be for developing the program'. The paper implied therefore that it was necessary to start again, yet no specific reference is made to deficiencies in the previous program, moreover, it is not even referred to.

In March 1988, CCDU/C recommended to the Boards that all applications by NESBs should be referred to CCDU staff for comment and that the Boards be invited to prepare programs over a 12 month period, once again in consultation with CCDU staff. Referring specifically to a request for guidance from the Performing Arts Board and the Literature Board, the CCDU urged both to ensure NESB representation on the Boards and committees and that their assessment criteria relating to Australian content acknowledge the work of NESB artists.

Council, at its 23 June meeting, agreed to the CCDU recommendation to replace the term 'incentive fund' with 'Special Council Program' (minutes Item 8.3). It urged Boards to have a greater 'sense of ownership' of Special Programs. They were not, according to the CCDU and subsequently Council, predicated on the grounds of equity alone ('Council is not a welfare agency'). They 'should be seen as integral to the enrichment of an Australian culture and the development of a distinctly Australian excellence.'

The Multicultural Arts Program required all Boards and the CCDU to set a firm minimum target of 4% of total SFTA funds in 1988-89 (except Aboriginal Arts Board). The Boards were also encouraged to develop programs of support, nominate a contact officer for NESB applicants and were required to publish policy positions

within 6 months. But there was no compulsion upon the Boards to consult, they were only 'encouraged' to do so. The process of prior monitoring had been abandoned.

Multicultural Arts was listed as an item of discussion at the Cultural Ministers Conference (3 June 1988) and a review of the Australia Council's 1987-88 initiatives was provided by Chris McGuigan. Not surprisingly, it is a positive assessment. Major initiatives were described as: 3 documentaries produced in conjunction with SBS TV, the salaries and expenses of 15 fulltime arts coordinators working within ethnic communities, the operating costs of ethnic music centres, the MATIA publications and production costs for drama and dance programs. These were all programs of long standing. The only new initiative was to co-sponsor, with the Office of Multicultural Affairs, a national conference 'Arts Policy for a Multicultural Australia' which brought together over 250 artists and administrators, the papers of which were to be published.

By contrast, Chris McGuigan in a memo to the Budget Sub-Committee of Council (25 July) reveals significant problems. Neither the Literature nor Performing Arts Boards had prepared submissions in accordance with the June recommendations of Council. No objectives or strategies had been identified for 1988-89. The CCDU, on the other hand, developed its programs and strategies throughout June, July and August in the form of a number of position papers and budget projections presented to the Sub Committee. In August, CCDU brought to the attention of Council the failure of the Boards to do likewise and asked that Council take action.

Council (minutes, 4-5 August, agenda item 8.1.2., p6) agreed to the Unit's request that all other Boards be required to submit proposals in the same way as it had done. It was pointed out to them that their expenditure was contingent on Council approval of programs. Reminding them of this resolution in a memo (7 September, 1988) to the Directors, Deborah

Mills, Director of CCDU, provided guidelines for their assistance. The Boards' responses were uneven.

The **Visual Arts/Crafts Board** completed its submission by the October meeting of Council where it was approved (agenda item 8.1.1). They identified two major strands in their program: 1) support for a major multicultural project which would be an exhibition of major contemporary visual arts and craft practice incorporating residencies, touring and seminars; and 2) the support and encouragement of individual artists. They aimed to produce a poster outlining assistance specifically for NESB artists and to ensure that reference is made in all materials to programs of relevance to them. They committed themselves to developing training programs, and to encouraging arts organisations, galleries and museums to host projects dealing with multicultural issues.

The **Literature Board** proposed to provide income support for writers, assistance with publications in both English and non-English languages and continue support of magazines publishing the work of those of 'non-Anglo-Celtic origin'. It hoped to increase community awareness through residencies and seminars.

The **Performing Arts Board**, unlike CCDU and the VA/CB, but in line with the Literature Board, made no statement endorsing the cultural significance of the program. On the contrary, it seemed at pains to counterbalance it, emphasising 'professionalism', a radical shift from its positive attempts in 1984 to come to grips with the multicultural program. Only 'professional activity' was supported, according to the Board. For the purposes of Multicultural Arts, this meant a 'professional artist' was an 'an individual recognised as a professional artist in their country of origin' or whose career in that country could be recognised as of 'professional standard' here in Australia. They set out a series of strategies including: support for traditional performance techniques at a 'professional' standard, encouraging the employment of NESB practitioners, equitable assessment of applications from NESBs and raising awareness

in the general public of 'professional' multicultural performing arts.

The word 'professional' appears in almost every sentence of the five page report but no attempt is made to explain or deal with the tautological definition despite the fact that the paper relies on it as its rationale. The CCDU, at Council, described the report as, 'unclear' particularly 'when the question (which has been put at previous meetings) of how 'standards' are assessed in this context, has not been addressed'.

In December, the Australia Council approved a name change to '**Arts for a Multicultural Australia**'. During 1988, the Office of Multicultural Affairs had published the national guidelines for the collection of ethnicity data. At the same time, consultations continued on a National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia. Deborah Mills in her submission to Council quoted the Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs' query '... what, if anything, is "multicultural" art?'. They decided to endorse the Victorian Ministerial Advisory Committee on Multicultural Arts' policy which moved away from 'multicultural arts' to developing an 'arts policy for a multicultural Australia'. The aim was to break down the implied separation of migrant artists from the mainstream and place emphasis on the ethnicity of the artist as opposed to a 'vision of the art'.

Council's Arts for a Multicultural Australia (AMA) program was:

- 1) to support the artistic activities of persons of non-English speaking background;
- 2) to support activities promoting intercultural understanding and interaction; and
- 3) to encourage major organisations to increase their support for NESB artistic activities.

To this end, information on the Australia Council was to be made more accessible; it was

aimed to increase NESB representation on Council, Boards and Committees; and to develop programs of support to meet the professional development needs of artists working in 'non-Anglo' traditions. A major priority was that Boards should employ more arts officers of a non-English-speaking background.

The Boards were expected to incorporate their objectives, performance indicators, expenditure targets and strategies into their budget presentations to Council. Evaluation of their performance would take place in the context of budget deliberations in 1989, and thereafter simultaneously with budget presentations.

In October, Chris McGuigan left the position of Program Manager. It was left vacant until Mary Dimech's appointment and commencement of duties in April 1989.

## 1989

The CCDU continued to monitor the progress of the program throughout 1989 and instituted a number of its own initiatives, including collaboration with SBS to produce three documentaries for the Mosaic Series. At the request of OMA the Unit also prepared additional information for the Federal Government's National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia. The submission had been prepared in December 1988 and was added to in April, 1989. It concentrated on the rationale and operations of Council policy and programs, expenditure targets and access and equity plans for artists and Council appointments to the Council, Boards and Committees.

The CCDU also organised a number of forums early in 1989 within Council in an attempt to raise the Boards' and staff awareness and sensitivity to the multicultural program. The report to Council (Council meeting minutes 4 April, Item 6.2) suggests continuing unease and dissension, referring to 'a need for...policy to be sold effectively to staff' and that 'there should be recognition by Council of the importance of

this issue' (the development of art in a multicultural Australia).

At the same Council meeting, the Performing Arts Board provided a revised definition of 'professional': 'For the purposes of Multicultural Arts the Board defines 'professional artist' as meaning one whose training, qualifications or experience, obtained either in Australia or overseas, provide that the person would warrant full time employment as an artist.' A less restrictive definition, it nevertheless failed to address the difficult area of recognition of qualifications which its predecessor, the Theatre Board, had tried to tackle in 1984.

In 1989, as part of Access and Equity requirements, a qualifications grid for Council, Board and Committee members was put in place. Boards were reminded by Council in August 1989 that the grid would include reference to gender, region, NESB and Art and Working Life issues. Council's criteria for NESB representation were:

- 1) that the appointee be NESB, either an arts practitioner or involved and familiar with the arts in Australia;
- 2) that the appointee be familiar with and have demonstrated commitment to non English speaking communities and multiculturalism in general;
- 3) that the appointee is articulate and has demonstrated abilities to advocate the principles and practices of multiculturalism.

Mary Dimech, the new Program Manager - Multicultural, had presented her first report to Council in August 1989. Each of the Boards exceeded their expenditure targets in 1988-89, she noted, but overall, Council had fallen short by 0.3%. However, because there was no standardised criteria for the designation of applications as multicultural, little in the way of statistical assessment of applications both approved and rejected and no clear information on assessment criteria, Dimech found serious

difficulties in providing any meaningful analysis of the Boards' and Committees' programs. Her recommendation was therefore that they adopt standardised designation and selection criteria and include, in the Annual Reports, lists of projects designated as multicultural and applicants both approved and rejected with reasons provided for that rejection.

She also noted with concern that the minimum target for 1989-90 set by Council was even lower than 1988-89's expenditure with a minimum of 6% of its total support for the arts allocated to the multicultural program. The PAB was required to allocate 5%, VACB - 5.5%, Literature Board - 7.1%, CCDU - 12.3%.

In October (minutes, item 8.9 pp 9-12) Council agreed to a series of recommendations by Dimech which laid the groundwork for the document called: '**Policies and Procedures of the Australia Council's program Arts for a Multicultural Australia**'. The document put in place standard selection criteria for designation of grant applications to the Boards and Units as multicultural for both artists, mainstream organisations and host bodies. It provided guidelines for the content of the Boards' Annual Reports and for the appointment of NESB representatives to Councils, Boards and Committees. The guidelines effectively reintroduced a form of monitoring of applications and evaluation of criteria and procedures both within the Boards and with Mary Dimech as the Multicultural Program Manager.

Also in October, it was recommended that Sneja Gunew be appointed to Council. Not long after her appointment, she became the chair of a new committee - Australia Council Multicultural Advisory Committee (ACMAC) - which was established in 1990, three years after the demise of the previous Multicultural Arts Committee.

Translation of the various Boards' information on programs and policies into languages other than English was once again raised as Boards, in particular the PAB, expressed concern about

having to carry the financial burden alone. Council agreed, in December, to publish a summary covering all the Boards and committees to be translated into the languages of the major migrant groups represented in Australia.

## 1990

A multicultural advisory committee was proposed to Council (Meeting 1-2 March, minutes Item 8.5) by the Strategic Development Unit. Council agreed to provide \$3,000 from Council Special Projects to fund a forum of all NESB representatives on Council, Boards and Committees to formulate recommendations regarding its establishment, membership and operations. On 20 April, Sneja Gunew (Chair, Council member), Mary Kalantzis (CCDC), Teresa Crea (PAB), Elizabeth Gertsakis (VACB), Mary Dimech (Staff), met to discuss such questions as NESB representation within Council, Boards and Committees, the rationale behind a multicultural arts committee, and the need to tackle the confusion surrounding multiculturalism and the arts. ACMAC saw itself as stimulating debate within and outside Council, instigating research and encouraging the decision-making bodies within Council to be more specific and responsive with regard to its decision-making (for instance, clarifying why it rejected some applications and accepted others).

When the recommendations came back to Council in May, it agreed to the establishment of a Multicultural Advisory Committee (ACMAC) for three years with annual review. Its membership would include all NESB members of Boards and Committees. It would initiate and monitor liaison with community organisations and State and Federal institutions, review and recommend positive initiatives by the Boards/ Units, promote understanding and monitor activities both within and outside Council and provide evaluation and policy advice to Council.

As part of the recommendations, ACMAC noted two research projects as positive

developments within at least two of the Boards. One was assisted by the Visual Arts/Crafts Board and conducted through the National Association of Visual Arts (NAVA); the other was the Cultural Access Team (CAT) report for the Performing Arts Board. These were major research/studies addressing the position and work of NESB arts practitioners in the visual and performing arts and the first to be undertaken since 1987 when the multicultural arts research commissioned by the MAC in 1986-87 had been abandoned with only part one completed.

The first formal meeting of ACMAC took place on 5-6 July. The committee addressed itself to some of the most contentious issues, issues which had dogged Council's multicultural and ethnic arts policy since the mid-1970s, such as:

- What constitutes professionalism?
- How do the targets set by Council relate to Australia's demographic makeup?
- The notion of 'excellence' which they argued was unexamined, alongside other value-laden terms;
- The adequacy of assessment procedures eg. use of appropriate and informed assessors;
- The existence or otherwise of infrastructures to support NESB artists.

Council noted ACMAC's concerns. At the same meeting, Mary Dimech's annual report was presented to Council. Recommendations approved by Council meant that the financial year 1990-91 would be a review period for what was now described as the AMA Program (Arts for a Multicultural Australia) only one year after the procedures had been agreed to. The review would assess expenditure, policy and implementation, and in particular, performance indicators. Where these did not exist, the Boards would be asked to develop them in conjunction with the CCDU and the Project Manager Multicultural (PMMC). Criteria and assessment procedures were also to be reviewed

and the Aboriginal Arts Board was to participate as well. Consultation with key NESB organisations and individuals was to be undertaken and a monitoring process for the Council's Information Strategy was to be established to assess its effectiveness. The Information Strategy was to be launched in October.

Target expenditures were set to increase in 1990-91. Council's overall target was to grow to 7.5%, the CCDC to 14.5%, the VA/CB 7%, Literature 8% and Performing Arts 7.3%.

Over and above these recommendations, Dimech's report to Council provided an insight into the Boards' programs and developments to date, as well as points of great sensitivity, particularly in her relationship and discussions with the Boards. For example, on the one hand the PAB argued that there was 'an inherent bias against the performing arts in the process developed for AMA accreditation'. As a result, they and the PMMC were to develop ways of dealing with this and other issues. On the other hand, the PAB had proposed a target expenditure of 5% which Dimech successfully argued should be increased to 7.3%.

Dimech noted that the **Literature Board** had maintained a 'fairly stagnant' level of expenditure. Despite its continuing support of programs such as subsidies to magazines and publishers and more than doubling the number of fellowships to NESB writers (8 in 1988-89 to 17 in 1989-90), the Board had still not published a statement on the program (as required by Council in June 1988 and October 1989), nor established performance indicators.

By contrast, the **CCDC** had continued to substantially exceed its target expenditure. Two major Council initiatives of 1990 were conducted under its auspices, namely the funding (after a two year break) of a national meeting of Multicultural Arts Officers which was held in May and support for the National Multicultural Arts Network (NMAN). Through the work of the Unit and Mary Dimech herself, liaison with community organisations such as

FECCA and the Migrant Resources Centres had been substantially upgraded. Dimech encouraged CCDU to raise its target expenditure to 14.5% of its total expenditure (an increase of 1.1% on the previous year).

The VA/CB is also commended for its initiatives including substantially increasing NESB representation on their committees, its support of the NAVA research into NESB visual artists and its efforts in promoting its programs to individuals and organisations. The VA/CB urged a concerted Council-wide advocacy program. Dimech reported that this was in fact to take place, an Information Advocacy campaign to be launched in October.

**Issues of Cultural Diversity**, the second Clever Country Forum, took place on 14 November at the offices of the Australia Council. Its occurrence was noted by Council at its meeting of 6-7 December. The Forum, a one-day intensive discussion covering questions of ethnicity, multiculturalism, racism, national identity and the role and functions of major cultural institutions including the media, was chaired by Ann Dunne (Deputy Chair, Australia Council).

Among the participants were members of Council (eg Sneja Gunew: Chair of ACMAC, Lin Onus: Chair of the Aboriginal Arts Board and Clive Scollay: Chair of the Arts Council of Australia, NT Division) and staff of Council were also present (eg Lynden Esdaile: SDU, Mary Dimech: PMMC, Colleen Ross: Art & Working Life, and Directors of Units). The majority of participants were drawn from a variety of backgrounds in the media, arts administration, education and arts practitioners. Discussion papers were presented by some including Sneja Gunew, Clive Scollay, Liz Jacka (Consultant, Communications Law Centre), Peter Manning (Director, ABC TV News & Current Affairs), James Jupp (Director, Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, ANU), Elaine Thompson (Dept. of Political Theory, University of NSW) and Vivienne Binns (Visual/Community Artist). Paolo Totaro, who was consultant and coordinator of the

forum, was to prepare a publication which would reflect the wide-ranging discussion that occurred during the forum.

At the same time, a Consultative Committee comprising Donald Horne (Chairman of Council), Max Bourke (General Manager), Sneja Gunew, Anne Dunne and Marjorie Johnson, reported to Council that it had considered the question of 'The Grid' in relation to appointments to all bodies of Council. It recommended that: 'An absolute requirement should be that 75% of all Committees at any one time would have ethnic representation and that over a period of three years all Committees would have such representation.' The Strategic Development Unit, in consultation with CCDU was required by Council to work up a proposal to apply the grid as it stood to committee membership 'in a timeframed and corporate way.'

## 1991

In the history of 'ethnic policies' at the Australia Council, 1991 will more than likely be seen as a significant watershed for two reasons: the series of meetings, held under the auspices and at the initiative of ACMAC, in November; and the acceptance by Council of a review of the AMA program, the brief for which is currently (as of February 1992) in preparation. Indications are that the brief will cover virtually all aspects of the AMA program: the efficacy of the program, Council's relationship with NESB arts practitioners, groups and organisations and an evaluation of its programs across all Boards and Units.

The events of the year were so numerous that it is not possible to cover them here. The work of the Program Manager - Multicultural in the field and within Council, combined with the extensive program of ACMAC initiatives and the work of Council member and ACMAC chair, Sneja Gunew, has meant that the AMA program has, from the admittedly limited evidence of internal Council papers, attained a profile and scope that it has not been able to achieve since the period 1983-85. In addition,

Council had expressed a commitment to engaging more fully with arts practice in the Asian region and to examining the Australia Council's role in Asia. With regard then to NESB representation on Committees, Boards and so on, it was aware that it had been Eurocentric in the past and sought now to redress the balance.

The year can be loosely divided into three policy areas: access and equity debates, ACMAC initiatives and finally, the AMA program itself and the review. All are interconnected but will be dealt with separately.

### *Access and Equity*

The grid system of appointments to all Committees was debated in Council at its 8 February meeting, as recommended in 1990. The grid covered the requirements of geography/regional representation, gender balance, NESB representation and AWL. The Agenda Paper (8.1.2) prepared by the Strategic Development Unit argued that Council had been sending out mixed signals to Boards and Units, on the one hand requiring smaller committees, on the other, requiring 'adequate representation and equity'. If each attribute was given equal weight, considerations such as credibility in the arts and general communities, knowledge of the field etc, become secondary considerations, it argued. Thus it came down to a struggle between the discourse of democratic and responsive administration as opposed to the discourse of efficiency, combined, interestingly enough, with the idea of 'credibility'. Implied here is a continuing argument, in another guise, that 'excellence' could be jeopardised by these other considerations. The solution is a compromise: the aim is for Council across the board to achieve 'adequate' and 'equitable' representation while individual committees might fail to provide this.

Excluding the Aboriginal Arts Board (not required to meet requirements with regard to NESB representation), 18% of all committee members were NESB. Music Composition and the Music Recording Committee alone had no

NESB representation. The target agreed by Council was that all committees would do so. Further, the target for representation generally was recommended to be set at 23%, an extrapolation of the 1986 Census figure of 22.3% of all Australians identified as either born overseas in a non-English speaking country or born in Australia with at least one parent born in a non-English speaking country. On that basis, 7 more NESB representatives would have to be appointed.

Later that year, Council reiterated its requirement that Boards and Committees assess and increase NESB representation using the criteria set out in August 1989 and again in February 1991. Implementation was the responsibility of the Boards, in consultation with the CCDU. It also repeated its request that appointees be fully briefed on the AMA program and concluded that it continued to support the work of ACMAC.

With regard to staffing, Council's February decision to highlight NESB skills on job descriptions as desirable characteristics, drew a subsequent sharp response from the Joint Consultative Council (JCC) to the effect that it had operated under approved selection procedures and that Council should not make any recommendations without prior consultation with it. The JCC requested that Council reformulate its recommendation to refer to the need to be 'sensitive to the needs of different community groups' - a far less specific formulation than that approved by Council in February. Council deferred a decision.

Corporate Services had provided a report to Council on NESB staff appointments. It did not provide an analysis of the spread of staff across the corporate structure and within the various administrative categories. The figures were attached, but without description of where (ie which Units) the staff were located and or what their responsibilities and levels of seniority were. Corporate Services were concerned about providing, or requesting of staff, further details because of a concern for confidentiality. Nevertheless, the report indicated that overall

25% of the staff were of NESB. Within the range of AS01—5 (the less senior administrative rankings), NESB1 constituted 20% of staff and NESB2, 6%. This administrative category represented 46% of Council's total staff. Those at or above AS06 (including the General Manager) constituted the remaining 54%. Of those, NESB1 constituted 20% of staff in this range and NESB2, 7%.

Council confirmed that it 'would like skills, knowledge and experience of people of NESB to be included as desirable characteristics in the job descriptions of project officers with the next vacancies', hence the reaction from the JCC. ACMAC's response was to request further information on the location of staff within Council.

ACMAC also requested that a register of NESBs be developed for the purposes of staffing and appointments as well as establishment of formal structures for consultation with ethnic communities. The proposal for a register took some time to be approved by Council. Boards and Units were expressing concern at the difficulty of finding NESB representatives. Mary Dimech, the PMMC, put a proposal to Council, at its 8-11 August meeting, regarding the establishment of a register after pursuing a number of options, not least of which was the possibility that OMA's register be used, however Dimech felt that theirs did not contain sufficient depth or arts-based information to be of use. A Council register, based on existing registers and connections, taking into account financial limitations, was therefore recommended as the best solution.

## **ACMAC**

ACMAC made two specific observations about the issue of NESB representation on committees and Boards in its February report to Council. When representatives had been appointed to the 1985-86 MAC as NESB representatives, it was clear that not all those appointed had a strong commitment to the area or were fully briefed on both their roles and that of the Committee. These problems had not been completely

resolved since ACMAC recommended that 'future NESB representatives be canvassed concerning their willingness to be NESB and AMA advocates...before being appointed... (p2)'. The second recommendation requested that Council give special consideration to appointments from Asia and the new communities.

Research, however, was another major priority for ACMAC. In its report to the February Council meeting (agenda item 8.6), ACMAC proposed, and had accepted by Council, a set of research proposals which would be funded by the (notional) allocation of \$25,000 set aside for the AMA program. This was the first far-reaching, Council-wide research to be proposed since the failure of Council to proceed after the demise of the Multicultural Arts Committee's research program in 1987-88. The research was to cover aspects of Council policy and practice:

- Review of AMA program
- Data collection (how and what is collected).
- A history of ethnic policies.
- Evaluation of assessment procedures used by Boards and Committees.
- The needs of new immigrant artists.
- A comparative study of multicultural arts policies in Canada, the UK, New Zealand and the USA.

Three have been agreed to by Council: the history of ethnic policies (this report), the comparative study of policies in other countries such as the UK and Canada (which has begun), and the review of the AMA program.

There were two research initiatives which ACMAC had praised in 1990: the CAT Report (supported by the PAB) and the NAVA Report (supported by the VA/CB). Dimech had noted in May to Council that the PAB was still considering the CAT Report but that she had yet to receive a copy and therefore could make

no comment.

In fact, the PAB had discussed the CAT report at its meeting of 18-19 April (minutes Item 8.4). The Board 'acknowledge(d) that the issue was a difficult one...and that views and responses were not unanimous'; it expressed 'concern' regarding some recommendations; and it felt that the implications of the recommendations went beyond the Board. Tassos Ioannides, CAT's chairperson, urged the PAB to provide funding for more research to provide further statistics and evidence to support its recommendations. The CAT report evidently had created significant difficulties within the PAB although there is no detailed discussion provided in the April minutes. In October, the PAB's minutes are more direct, if briefer. With regard to CAT, the PAB states that its response 'had not been favourable' and it decided to take no further action the matter (minutes, 81-1 October, Item 8.4).

The PAB's response to the CAT Report was completely at variance with that of the ACMAC who recommended to Council that other Boards take similar initiatives since: '...it is an efficient and instructive way (of) furthering the aims of the AMA programme' (19 July). Council agreed with this recommendation at its 8-11 August meeting (minutes, p13). ACMAC was concerned that the PAB had not continued consultation on the Report with it or the PMMC. Unlike the PAB, ACMAC found that the recommendations 'resonate with the experiences of all members of ACMAC and of numerous key players in the field'. ACMAC raised the CAT Report again at its November meeting expressing the need to move forward on its recommendations but this is already one month after the PAB had decided not to proceed at all.

At the same meeting (19 July), ACMAC considered other matters besides the CAT Report. It recommended that the first draft of Arts for a Multicultural Australia: Issues and Strategies be circulated and that a workshop for contributors and Council staff take place in June 1992, to which council agreed.

Council also noted the makeup of the meetings to be held in November - a forum made up of all NESB representatives on committees and Board, three invitees and held in conjunction with the Consultative Group (OMA, State officers with multicultural arts responsibilities and the National Multicultural Arts Network - NMAN) - and the ACMAC meeting itself. Council later agreed to host this first meeting of the Joint Consultative Group (as it called).

In addition, ACMAC provided an account of meetings with Sema Varova and Lee Choon Siau (OMA), Sue Hammond (Victorian Ministry for the Arts), FECCA and NMAN. These meetings not only concerned plans for the forthcoming meetings but other initiatives, consolidating the role of ACMAC as a body able to liaise with a range of government and non-government groups, create initiatives in the field and in turn feed back into Council.

The November meetings took place over two days (20-21). First was the inaugural meeting of the National Arts for a Multicultural Australia Working Group (NAMA) which drew together representatives of the SAFAs, EACs, FECCA and NMAN and was co-sponsored by OMA and the Australia Council. Sneja Gunew, the chair of ACMAC, opened the meeting with a statement of objectives, all of which were then reflected in the aims and decisions taken by the meeting. Each representative spoke about the structures, policies and programmes of their group or agency. The aim of the meeting was to create a structure to support regular future meetings and create on-going dialogue between the participants which could lead to a coordination of policies across Australia, nonetheless taking into consideration the different 'situations' of the groups involved.

Among other decisions, it was agreed that research into the arts and multiculturalism should be coordinated and that information and data be shared and exchanged amongst the NAMA group. Perhaps the most fundamental decision was that the NAMA group would develop 'minimum guidelines and a minimum model' for AMA policies at federal and state

government level. These agreements could have far reaching implications, both protecting the programme within the various agencies and creating a network of support and development that can actively assist those agencies. A national AMA strategy would also feed into the National Cultural Strategy currently underway. The meeting also wished to consider OMA's Terms of Reference for the forthcoming 'Survey of Access Issues for Artists of Non-English speaking background (NESB)'.

On the second day, the ACMAC Forum was held. The forum is the original ACMAC structure bringing together NESB representatives of all Boards, Committees and the Council, as well as invited experts from the field. The invitees included Dr. Chandrabhanu (no longer a member of the Dance Committee of Council), Eugenia Hill (NMAN), Helen Andreoni (who spoke of the NAVA research **Outside the Gum Tree** on the situation of NESB visual artists) Carl Harbaum (FECCA) and Professor Joseph Pivato from Canada. The forum addressed itself to questions of assessment (ethno-specific, peer group, procedures etc), assimilationism and mainstreaming, comparative international models, and so on. The forum felt that it was critical to find ways of reaching NESB artists who had not yet been contracted. Among the recommendations made were a request that data collection distinguish NESB 1 from NESB 2 artists. In addition, the general terms of assessment procedures should be re-examined taking into account whether assessors have sufficient, specific expertise in the area of multiculturalism. There might well be a need for an artform specific, ethno-specific system of assessment. To that end, the forum recommended that the VA/CB in particular, 'develop a system of external assessors for culturally specific works'.

On the third day, ACMAC itself met and formulated a series of ten recommendations which were to be put before Council's March 1992 meeting. The recommendations refer to matters of assessment including the possibility of generating ethno-specific guidelines, appointed of NESB representatives and

monitoring of those appointments, and that consultation mechanisms be set up between ACMAC and OMA on consultancies in the area of the arts and multiculturalism. They also recommended: distinguishing between NESB 1 and 2 when collecting data; that assessment procedures be addressed including the appointment of external assessors; that mechanisms for appointing and inducting NESB representatives to be clarified; and a number of specific points relating to individual Boards.

The CAT Report was discussed and ACMAC decided to officially request a response from the PAB, through Council, to the report. ACMAC felt that since the report had minimal resources at its disposal it should be regarded as a pilot programme, a first step, hence it requested that the PAB be asked to prepare a larger study of performing artists along the lines of the NAVA Report **Outside the Gum Tree** which Helen Andreoni wrote (in conjunction with Janis Wilton and Joseph Eisenberg) on visual artists. The NAVA Report had only just been completed and has not yet been published.

Among ACMAC's recommendations is a request that resources be provided for 'continuing the learning process and sharing of information from the field inaugurated by ACMAC.'

## **AMA Program**

Mary Dimech reported to Council for the year 1990-91 that the Boards and Committees were continuing to develop and implement programmes. There were, however, 'rumblings of discontent' (p3). She urged patience, pointing out that the programme would complete its first three year cycle in August 1992 and that a review, conducted by an independent consultant, would then be able to provide 'measurable results and qualitative indications'. She acknowledged problems that had arisen, for example, with an expansion of the designation criteria, particularly those referring to funding of mainstream companies whose work reflected/reflects multicultural

Australia. She recommended, in this instance, that expenditure on NESB 1 and 2 artists or groups be separated from Anglo-Australian artists or organisations, for the purposes of determining target expenditures. Furthermore, she notes that the target expenditures themselves were a concern for the Boards and Committees but she responds by stating that targets are a way of establishing strategies and performance indicators, as well as being devices for monitoring and evaluating programmes. Both quantitative and qualitative measures were vital, she argued, as a way of measuring the progress of the AMA programme.

It was confirmed to Council that the research briefs the ACMAC had proposed were underway. In May, a draft report by Apollo Totaro was presented to Council on the Cultural Diversity Forum held in November 1990. (The report was attached to agenda item 8.4 on the Ideas Summit and Clever Country Forums.) Council agreed that it should be edited, published and widely distributed (It has now been published, written by Dr. Paolo Totaro [1992] **Cultural Diversity: Media and the Arts**, Australia Council). Further, Council agreed to establish a regular seminar/meeting to continue the 'productive dialogue' initiated at the Cultural Diversity Forum. However, no further forums were to be funded (minutes, p.5) as Council believed that **Ideas for Australia** would pick up those issues. Nonetheless it did agree to focus its support on the area of cultural diversity and multiculturalism through ACMAC.

Another significant publication was the Autumn/Winter double issue of **Artlink** which was devoted to Arts in a Multicultural Australia (Vol 11 No 1 & 2 Autumn/Winter 1991). The Australia Council provided special funding for the publication (along with OMA, the Victorian Ministry for the Arts, CCDU and ATSIC). It combines critique, analysis and cultural theory with case studies, statements and articles by practitioners, artwork and photography: a panoply of activity and reflection.

Dimech also reported to Council on the

CCDC's changes to the functions of the community-based Multicultural Arts Officers which had resulted in a shift away from artform activities to a greater emphasis on advocacy and policy development.

Council set target expenditures for 1991-92 as follows: CCDU 15%, Literature 7.5%, Performing Arts 8% and Visual Arts/Crafts 9%. The overall target for Council was 7.5%, and included in this figure is the Strategic Development Unit.

During its April meeting, (at which the CAT Report was tabled) the PAB decided to recommend to Council that the AMA Program be reviewed, taking into account the PAB's 'successes' in the field as well as continuing 'problems', and for Council to clarify its objectives. At its 8-11 August meeting, Council agreed (minutes, Item 8.20) '...to evaluate and refine...objectives, strategies and performance indicators.' As this history is being written a brief is in preparation.

When the document **Policies and Procedures of the Australia Council: Arts for a Multicultural Australia** was prepared and circulated, it was expected that these would be reviewed. They are regarded, in effect, as interim guidelines. The review process which Council is about to implement is therefore informed by an accepted and long standing commitment of review of the guidelines, on the one hand, and a continuing concern, expressed by at least some of the Boards and Units about problems with the programme. As the history of the review process suggests, it can be a destabilising and unproductive process, although there have been other occasions when the reverse has happened and the programme has benefited greatly. As the ACMAC Forum of November 1991 demonstrated, there is now an extensive network of practitioners (artists, cultural theorists, academics, researchers, etc), community organisations, local, state and federal government agencies and so on, committed to development of the arts and multiculturalism and ongoing analysis and evaluation of existing programmes. Moreover,

that network has committed itself to collaboration and cooperation. It is to be hoped that these initiatives will provide a beneficial climate in which Council's deliberations over the next year of the review process can take place.

*Provided by the Australia Council, the Federal Government's arts funding and advisory body.*

# Arts for a Multicultural Australia, 1998

Australia Council for the Arts Arts for a Multicultural Australia: Australia Council Policy on Australian Arts and Cultural Diversity Sydney, Australia Council for the Arts, 1998.

## Arts for a Multicultural Australia

### Australia Council Policy on Australian Arts and Cultural Diversity

The objectives of AMA are:

- to advocate for and support all Australians to participate in and develop an understanding and appreciation of arts which explore, promote and utilise Australia's cultural diversity.
- to recognise, support and advocate for the participation of artists and communities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the arts. (The AMA policy focus is on people from non-English speaking backgrounds and Australian South Sea Islanders. The Australia Council's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Policy promotes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as integral to Australia's national identity.)
- to promote cultural understanding as a key competency in the development of proficiency in expression through the arts, and in the administration, facilitation and promotion of the arts.

These objectives relate directly to the Australia Council's corporate goals, in particular, to recognise cultural diversity in the arts. The Australia Council's Arts for a Multicultural Australia policy was introduced in 1989 and is based on principles of access, diversity and participation in the arts.

### Australia Council & AMA

The Australia Council recognises Arts for a Multicultural Australia (AMA) objectives and is committed to them.

### Arts funding programs: grant categories

The Australia Council's Funds and Board support artists and communities to do work which progresses AMA objectives through their grant categories. All grant applicants are assessed against the same criteria and selected exclusively on the basis of merit.

Council staff can provide assistance to applicants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The Council implements Federal Government recommended best practice Access and Equity strategies to ensure that cultural or language barriers that may be faced by applicants of non-English speaking and Australian South Sea Islander backgrounds are overcome.

These include:

### Information

Advertisements about grant programs are regularly placed in the English language and ethnic media.

The Australia Council Grants Handbook provides information translated into 12 languages about accessing the free translator/interpreter service. This service is available to NESB applicants who wish to speak to the Council staff in a language other than English. Australia Council staff will provide information or refer applicants to existing support networks.

## Assistance

The Australia Council actively encourages arts and non-arts organisations to assist people from NESB or anyone seeking to undertake activities which have AMA objectives.

Some organisations receive assistance to employ specialist staff such as multicultural arts officers or multicultural marketing staff.

## Advocacy

The Council provides advocacy about the AMA policy to Fund members and the public through its publications and by drawing on specialist expertise and the advice of the Australia Council Multicultural Advisory Committee (ACMAC).

To stimulate and inform discussion about AMA objectives, the Australia Council has produced a number of research publications, an AMA information kit and a slide kit.

Council attempts to ensure that members of the Funds and Council itself are of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and enabled to make well-informed funding decisions and recommendations. The Funds are provided with additional culturally specific information and expertise by specialists (from a Council database called the Register of Peers), to assist them to take these perspectives into account when considering the artistic merits of applicants.

ACMAC was established in 1989 to advise the Council and its Funds on matters relating to multiculturalism and the arts. The committee consists of Fund members with expertise in advising on cultural diversity.

## Australia Council Initiatives

The Australia Council undertakes a number of initiatives which are coordinated through the AMA Action Plan within the Council's Corporate Plan.

## AMA action plan

The Arts for a Multicultural Australia action plan (1996-99) currently focuses on:

- providing the Council, Government and public with information.
- providing the Council's Funds with AMA advocacy, and supporting ACMAC.
- ensuring ongoing AMA policy integration, development and evaluation across all sections of the Council.
- increasing the opportunities for unique Australian art which explores, promotes and utilises our cultural diversity, to be presented to national and international audiences.
- increasing audiences for this work.
- encouraging the development of audiences from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- identifying the Council's staff requirements for implementation of the AMA policy and coordinating training.
- ensuring the effective implementation of access and equity strategies.

Some of the Council's recent AMA activities are:

- All Council's Funds and Board have included strategic initiatives which address key developmental issues for AMA in 1997-1998.
- The Council, through its Audience Development and Advocacy Division, assisted four arts organisations to employ specialised audience development or marketing staff to develop a greater audience among ethnic communities.
- The Council's Strategy and Policy Division undertook a number of specific research projects for AMA such as the documentation of best practice case studies in audience development in the book [The World is Your Audience](#).

- An AMA policy training module was developed and implemented by the Council's Corporate Services Division to help staff provide information to all applicants and to plan targeted strategic initiatives.

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