

Galbally Report and its implications for the Ecumenical Migration Centre

Langfield, M. "The Ecumenical Migration Centre, Melbourne: The First Twenty Years". (This information is drawn from the book by the same author entitled Espresso-Bar to EMC, a thirty-year history of the Ecumenical Migration Centre, Melbourne, Monash Publications in History No.22, 1996.)

Implications of Migrant Services and Programs for the Ecumenical Migration Centre

The recommendations of the Galbally Report of 1978 became the basis for government policies for migrant services over the next decade. While this led to a number of improvements (more Grant-in-Aid workers, ethnic schools, English language tuition and translation services, better communication and information, Migrant Resource Centres, the setting up in 1980 of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) for research and policy advice, the extension of ethnic radio and the establishment of an ethnic television task force), inadequacies remained. Furthermore, it resulted in intense competition between groups for limited government funding. Diana Batzias and Michael Liffman, Community Educator from 1977, were instrumental in developing both written and practical responses to the Report and also to the refugee 'crisis' at this time.

The creation of AIMA was apprehensively awaited to determine the role of CHOMI in the new post-Galbally situation. It was assumed that certain roles formerly fulfilled by CHOMI could be done by others while CHOMI would provide specialised services. AIMA had the potential either to wipe out or encompass CHOMI, causing tensions within EMC. The relationship between CHOMI and AIMA, and later with the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), was a sensitive one and took some time to clarify. EMC staff hoped for a contractual

arrangement with AIMA to fund a planned national on-line database on multicultural affairs. AIMA closed in December 1986, however, leaving the need for a national database unmet. The closure increased pressure on CHOMI which became, until the late 1980s, the only independent resource centre in Australia focussing on immigration, refugee, multicultural and ethnic issues. When MicroMAIS (Multicultural Australia and Immigration Studies) was established by OMA in 1988, it occurred with minimal input from, and recognition of, EMC despite the fact that the idea had originated from EMC staff and CHOMI was one of the key information providers.