

# Don't settle for less

Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services, Committee for Stage 1, Don't Settle for Less - Report of the Committee: Summary Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986.

## **Committee for Stage 1 of the Review** **Dr James Jupp, Chairman**

### **Summary**

#### ***The brief***

In December 1985 the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs commissioned the Committee to undertake the first stage of a two stage Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services. The purpose of the first stage was to advise on the Federal Government's role in assisting overseas born residents to achieve their equitable participation in Australian society. The second stage will evaluate key programs and services already in place against the plan thus developed.

The central task for Stage I of the Review was to propose appropriate principles, and to advise on the essential elements of, and priorities within, a strategy based on these principles to guide the development of the Federal Government's role and policies over the next decade. The Committee was also required to undertake a number of more specific tasks: overview needs; identify current arrangements, noting any gaps and overlap; advise on the nature of policies, programs and services required to meet needs; make proposals for future structures, levels and modes of service delivery and for their co-ordination; advise on the conduct of Stage II of the Review; and propose approaches for on-going monitoring and evaluation. The terms of reference for Stage I are set out at Attachment A.

### ***Interpretation of the brief***

The concept of 'equitable participation' is central to the Committee's brief. Equity in the popular sense means 'fairness', and in the legal sense conveys the idea of recourse to inherent principles of justice. Translated into contemporary public policy, equity is concerned with outcomes, and the processes by which these are achieved. Participation, in the literal sense, means 'having a share in' or, in a more active sense, 'to take part'. In the public policy arena, it brings together a number of separate but interrelated aspirations: a share in the political, social and economic processes of Australian society; a share in decision making; a share in the programs and services provided by government; and accountability on the part of the agencies of government to the people they serve.

Equitable participation, in the context of the Review, was taken to mean the processes by which overseas-born residents and their families are assisted to achieve outcomes available to other Australians. This is a two way process. Institutions must be open to all members of society and in their operations must seek out and be responsive to the claims of different interests. But individuals must also be ready to take part in the political, administrative and service processes: to assert their claims, to inform and to advocate.

This interpretation has implications for the Committee's understanding of 'settlement', which in the terms of reference is described as the process of adjustment which 'may be said to culminate in full and equal participation in Australian society'. In discussing settlement, there has been a tendency to focus only upon the adjustments expected of immigrants, and not upon the changes society should make to

facilitate their adjustment. A theme of the report is the necessity for mutual adjustment if settlement is to be achieved. As long as barriers to full and equal participation exist, appropriate provisions must be made. Such provisions cannot be limited in time, or limited to arrangements at the margins of general community services. These services themselves must be fundamentally changed to recognise and respond to cultural and linguistic diversity.

This recognition has direct implications for the approach adopted by the Committee. We did not confine our attention to those services and programs provided exclusively or predominantly for immigrants, and those which promote intercultural understanding. Rather, in keeping with the central theme of equitable participation, we took as its context the development of programs and services in and for a multicultural society. The vast majority of programs and services used by the overseas born and their families are those provided for the community at large. Federal Government services and programs directed largely at immigrants or at the promotion of intercultural activities totalled less than \$200 million in 1985/86. Government outlays for education, health, social security and welfare, housing, culture and recreation, and labour and employment amounted to approximately \$34 billion in the same year. It is critical that publicly funded activities equitably serve all members of that public who, as residents, taxpayers and voters, have a clear stake in them.

### ***The approach taken to the Review***

The Committee set out to develop a systematic and achievable plan for advancing the Federal Government's commitment to equitable participation. This did not involve a detailed evaluation of existing programs and services, but rather an overview of existing arrangements as the groundwork for future planning. Our charter is a forward looking one: to set the scene for developments over the next decade.

The key elements of the Committee's brief,

which oriented the approach to the Review, were the concept of equitable participation, and the delineation of the Federal Government's role. The first was central to the determination of principles, the second to the development and application of the strategy.

In discharging its brief, the Committee worked through three steps. First, we established the operational context: the development of policy over time; and the profile of the overseas born and their families in Australia, with particular reference to areas of disadvantage. Second, we identified principles which would give direction to the broad ideal of equitable participation, and the essential elements of a strategy for the Federal Government deriving from the principles. Third, we detailed how the strategy should be applied, and priorities within it. This involved a wide ranging review of Federal Government activities, and action that can be taken by the Federal Government to develop its own activities, and those in other sectors.

### ***Principles***

The Federal Government's programs and services relating to settlement and multiculturalism have developed over a considerable period in response to a variety of international and domestic factors. Although no single document encapsulates the principles which programs and services promote and reflect, a number of separate documents and statements can be regarded as significant. These are:

- the nine Immigration principles and the four Galbally Report principles adopted by the Federal Government in 1978 and reaffirmed by subsequent governments;
- the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial
- Discrimination (signed by Australia in 1966 and ratified in 1975), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (signed by Australia in 1972 and ratified in 1980);

- the objects for the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, set out in its enabling legislation (passed by Parliament in 1979; amended in 1985).

In developing principles, the Committee's approach was to identify the key parameters to give effect to the broad ideal of equitable participation. The principles signify the central goals or outcomes which policies should aim to achieve. The ways in which these goals are achieved become the strategy.

We believe four principles should be adopted to guide the Federal Government's role and policies.

1. All members of the Australian community should have an equitable opportunity to participate in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the nation.

Equity, in the context of the Review, requires that the opportunity of individuals, or groups, to participate in all areas of Australian life should not be hindered because of their immigrant, national, religious, cultural, ethnic or racial origin. As a corollary, government should identify barriers to equitable opportunity and take action to remove them, by promoting changes in the knowledge and behaviour of people and institutions who control social and economic resources, and changes in the knowledge and behaviour of those who want access to them.

2. All members of the Australian community should have equitable access to and an equitable share of the resources which governments manage on behalf of the community.

Equity, in the context of the Review, requires that policies, programs and services take account of the range of needs and circumstances arising from immigration, and cultural and linguistic diversity. This means that all members of the community should be entitled to the same standard of service, although the actual service

might be delivered in different ways.

3. All members of the Australian community should have the opportunity to participate in and influence the design and operation of government policies, programs and services.

The right of people to participate in the process of making decisions that affect their lives is central to the principle of democracy. Over the past two decades there has been a growing trend on the part of governments to allow greater input into decision-making through a range of consultative processes. Advances in administrative law also reflect a belief in the importance of the public being well informed so as to enhance its civic role, and improve the responsiveness and accountability of government. The principle has been expressed in terms of participation, rather than consultation because of the nature of the two processes. It is the consumers who participate; it is government which consults. Consultation is just one means of giving effect to the goal of participation.

4. All members of the Australian community should have the right, within the law, to enjoy their own culture, to practise their own religion, and to use their own language, and should respect the rights of others to their own culture, religion and language.

This principle builds on the commitment deriving from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Culture, religion and language are the embodiment and expression of personal values and identity. We cannot speak of truly accepting people as equal members of Australian society without accepting their right to the cultures, religions and languages which are important to them. The restriction of rights by what the law permits is an important qualification, as the law is the ultimate and essential arbiter of a society's values. Nor should the right to use one's language be seen in any

way as undermining the status of English as Australia's common language. The right to use a language of one's choice does not mean the right to be spoken to in that language. As a matter of equity, however, measures are needed to meet the language needs of people who do not speak English.

The four principles are universal in their formulation, as the Committee firmly believes that the same fundamental propositions should apply equally to all Australians, irrespective of their background. The four principles should not be pursued in isolation from each other: they make up an integral set, with each one interacting with the others to achieve the overarching ideal of equitable participation.

## **Strategy**

In developing a strategy, the Committee

- examined the types of action required to promote the achievement of the principles with regard to overseas born residents and their families; and
- considered the role of the Federal Government in carrying through the strategy.

The Committee rejects the view that the Federal Government, because it exercises the immigration power, is therefore responsible for all aspects of services that address those of our population who were born overseas or are from non-English speaking backgrounds. There are neither constitutional, practical nor functional grounds to justify this stance. It is a recipe for marginalisation, creating two classes of Australians.

Consideration of the four principles indicates that a strategy of four elements is required.

1. Equipping people born overseas and their families with the basic resources which they require to function effectively and on an equitable basis in Australia.

This element of the strategy focuses on the overseas born and aims to equip them with the resources critical to social and economic functioning: income; accommodation; useable occupational skills; ability to speak English; and family, community and societal support. While the Federal Government is a significant provider in this area, other government jurisdictions also play a part because of the functional division of powers, for example, in the areas of education and regulation of qualifications.

2. Institutional change, so as to ensure that the organisations which make decisions about programs and services, and which implement them, do so in an equitable manner.

This element of the strategy focuses on the institutions that allocate resources and provide services to the community of which the overseas born and their families are a constituent part, and aims to achieve the same standard of service for all eligible users. The relevant institutions are those of the Federal, State and local governments, and of the non-government sector: churches, unions, service organisations, political parties and business enterprises.

3. Promoting good community relations, that is, social attitudes and behaviour which respect the rights of all.

This element of the strategy focuses on all Australians, and aims to combat prejudice and conflict, and promote harmony and understanding. This requires the co-operation and contributions of all levels of government, and of individuals and organisations, 'ethnic' and other.

4. Supporting the opportunity for people to maintain, enjoy and develop their cultural heritage and identity.

This element of the strategy focuses on individuals and organisations, and aims to promote innovative and equitable policies for cultural support. While cultural activity is mainly resourced by individuals, voluntary

groups and private organisations governments at all levels also provide significant support (for example, through funding for schools, libraries, museums, cultural grants, the provision of venues and facilities, and land grants to religious bodies for places of worship).

The decision to describe the four mechanisms outlined above as elements of the strategy, not as separate strategies, is deliberate: like the proposed principles, they are integrally related, and must all be actively pursued. Nor do individual elements of the strategy relate to individual principles: it is coincidental that there are four of each.

The Federal Government's role in promoting the strategy is a complex one. Although its legal and financial status vests it with the power and responsibility to play a leading role, in few of the relevant areas of activity is it the sole actor of importance. The successful implementation of the strategy will require the active co-operation of all the parties involved in considering the implementation of the strategy, the Committee has focussed on the action the Federal Government can take in those areas for which it is directly responsible or for which it provides funding, and measures it may take to influence developments in areas beyond its immediate responsibility.

A general issue to be addressed in the implementation of the strategy is the balance of 'general' and 'special' services. Presently, two approaches are used by the Federal Government in response to the diverse needs and circumstances of the community. The first is to adapt programs and services which are aimed at the general community; the second is to provide programs and services which are aimed exclusively at immigrants or particular ethnic groups.

While the Committee believes that it is necessary to make all organisations sensitive to the diversity of the population they are serving, and measures to promote this are central to the report, the process does not necessarily mean that specialist agencies will decline in numbers

or importance. For the foreseeable future there is an important and legitimate place for both organisations serving the general population and sections within them and separate bodies serving specific groups. There is no evidence that approach is inherently more effective and more efficient with respect to the whole range of programs and services supported by government. The relationship between the two approaches must be pragmatically determined. They should be seen as complementary rather than contradictory in nature.

## ***Application of the strategy***

### **Basic Resources**

While the immigrant selection process operates to ensure that many, if not the majority, of immigrants have at least some of the resources critical to their effective functioning in Australia, some, particularly refugees, lack most or even all of the necessary assets.

The Federal Government provides a range of services to enhance the resources available to immigrants: initial accommodation, assistance to enter the labour market, assistance to learn English, income support from the time of arrival, information and assistance to develop support networks both on a one to one basis and on a community level. While a number of these arrangements need some attention to improve their scope, flexibility and effectiveness, two stand out as needing most serious attention: the recognition of occupational qualifications, and English as a Second Language (ESL) learning arrangements.

Labour market placement is a major determinant of effective social and economic functioning. The Committee was struck by the intensity of concern about the non recognition of overseas qualifications, the extent of the difficulties experienced, and the large number of qualified people entering Australia without prior assessment of qualifications and occupational counselling. More concerted action is needed in the areas of overseas assessment, bridging courses, retraining, occupational English and

testing, and advisory services. This will involve the Council on Overseas Professional Qualifications, the various expert councils and panels associated with it, state and professional registration bodies, and among others the various government authorities with responsibilities for immigration, employment, income support and educational provisions.

Proficiency in English is the single most important factor in enabling people to participate equitably in Australian life, yet major recent reviews of child and adult ESL provisions found that many of those in need of ESL assistance, both adults and children, are not receiving adequate assistance. Access to ESL assistance should be available to people at any stage of their lives, and should certainly not be limited to the first few years after arrival.

At the school level, special ESL tuition is often withdrawn before students have the necessary skills in English to succeed to their full potential in the education stream. Conversely, generalist teachers are usually ill-equipped to diagnose specific ESL needs and to attend to them as the cause of general learning problems. Many do not have access to specialist assistance and advice. At the adult level, the shortage of resources available to ESL programs, inadequate co-ordination of separate ESL programs and the manner in which priorities within them are determined, results in inadequate learning opportunities and the exclusion of potential students.

These problems persist despite substantial injections of funds in recent years. There is a limit to what can be achieved until the education and training systems as a whole accept responsibility for ensuring that the one fifth to one quarter of the population from non-English speaking backgrounds have equitable access to learning provisions available to the community generally. At the school level, the Federal Government needs to co-ordinate more effectively its educational policies and resources to bring about qualitative improvements in the educational experiences of children from non-English speaking backgrounds. The full co-

operation of the States, tertiary institutions and the non-government education sector will be essential. At the adult level, closer co-ordination between the Adult Migrant Education Program, the Technical and Further Education sector and labour market programs, and greater priority to ESL in labour market programs, is necessary.

### Institutional Change

There is considerable evidence of inequities arising from the failure of many institutions to take appropriate account of the linguistic and cultural differences in the community, and to involve clients and consumers of services in determining the nature of these services. To address these shortcomings, change is needed:

- in the manner in which services are provided, by taking steps to ensure that all those eligible to make use of services know about them, and that the services are appropriate to their needs and can be effectively used by them;
- in organisational decision-making structures and processes, by providing scope for participation by clients and consumers;
- in the "culture" of organisations, by developing the commitment, understanding and skills of staff at all levels.

The particular measures the Federal Government employs to bring about change in its own institutions and those of other sectors will differ. Where the Government controls or directly pays for services, its influence can be considerable. Where the Federal Government does not directly fund the activities of other bodies, it can seek to influence them by persuasion or education, or by providing conditional financial or other assistance to help them make changes.

The Federal Government has already set in place an Access and Equity planning approach applying across a large number of departments and authorities to improve the delivery to members of ethnic communities of those services it provides directly or funds. The

Committee strongly endorses this approach and proposes that it be strengthened by further measures to build access and equity objectives systematically into policy planning, to monitor and co-ordinate developments within government, and to open the approach up to greater public scrutiny.

The Committee is convinced of the need for a formal advisory and monitoring mechanism to oversee developments. We are not confident that an adequate body of expertise exists in each department to develop the requisite measures independently. Two central questions were addressed in considering the type of organisation which should undertake this function: whether it should be a statutory authority, and what its portfolio location should be. On balance, we favour an office within the Immigration and Ethnic Affairs portfolio given that the tasks of the agency would be closely linked to the day to day operations of Government and would need the close attention of a Minister for whom overseas-born residents are a major focus of interest.

In reaching this position we considered carefully views put to us that the Office should be located in a central agency, such as the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, or established as a statutory authority comparable to the Ethnic Affairs Commissions which operate in four States. Location of such an Office within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet would probably result in the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs being appointed to assist the Prime Minister, while a statutory authority would not have the necessary day-to-day access to the processes of government. Because of the importance we attach to the Office, we believe its effectiveness (including the issue of where it would be best located) should be reviewed three years after it is established.

It is important that the Office have:

- a high profile for its activities publicly and within government;

- a clear mandate from government, setting out its responsibilities and powers; and
- a staffing structure and range of skills commensurate with the functions.

Priorities in effecting change within the institutions providing programs and services include:

- improvement in management data systems
- appropriate staffing practices
- consultation with ethnic community groups
- language services integrated with general community services.

The uniform presentation of management data on birthplace, ethnic origin and mother tongue by program managers is essential for the effective measurement of access and equity. The proposed Office would be well placed to advise on the development of data systems.

The ability of departments and authorities to meet the needs of a society with a significant proportion of overseas born residents and characterised by a diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds will be greatly enhanced if staff, at all levels, includes people with related personal understanding, experience and skills. This has implications for staff recruitment, deployment and training.

The Access and Equity planning approach requires all departments and authorities to provide opportunities for participation by members of ethnic communities in policy formulation and ongoing program delivery. An important function of the proposed Office would be to develop guidelines for more effective participation. Many agencies are relatively inexperienced in consulting with or providing opportunities for participation by the 'ethnic' constituency and tend either to overlook it or simply to operate through the already overburdened channels of the Ethnic Communities Councils and their Federation.

Effective language services, drawing both on bilingual staff and interpreter and translator services are an essential measure if programs and services are to be provided at the same standard for non-English speakers. This is the responsibility of all service providers, and language services should be built, as a matter of course, into general provisions. A systematic approach to the provision of language services at the Federal level will require a number of changes: in the funding of interpreting and translating services; in the wide use of bilingual staff; in the quality and standards of services provided; and in the conditions applying to language services staff and contract interpreters and translators. Given the importance of language services, the Federal Government should also help to stimulate the development of State government initiatives.

The promotion of equitable participation cannot rest entirely upon the efforts of the Federal Government: it also relies on parallel efforts at other levels of government and in the non-government sector. Where the Federal Government funds activities in these sectors through specific purpose payments, the access and equity planning approach can be followed. In other areas, different approaches are called for.

Almost one third of total Federal Government outlays in 1985/86 was for payments to the States and the Northern Territory. Of the estimated \$22 billion, approximately \$13.5 billion was for general purposes to which no conditions are attached. Financial Assistance and Health Grants, which make up the bulk of the general purpose payments, are distributed in accordance with advice provided by the Commonwealth Grants Commission. In its calculations, the Commission takes account of cost and revenue differentials between States which impact on their capacity to provide broadly the same standard of service across an agreed set of services. 'Ethnicity' does not feature significantly as a factor influencing the determination of cost differentials, despite repeated claims that service costs are in many instances higher when dealing, in particular,

with non-English speakers. Improvements are needed in the methods of recording direct and indirect expenditures related to the provision of services to the overseas born and their families in order to affect the basis on which general Financial Assistance and Health Grants are determined.

Local Government is an increasing provider of human services such as health, welfare and recreation. Federal Government financial assistance to local government in 1985/86 was over \$1 billion; half this amount was in the form of general revenue assistance, which is allocated through grants commissions in each State. Cost differentials based on 'ethnicity' variables are also a consideration in the services provided by local government, and also warrant examination. The recently enacted legislation under which the Federal Government allocates general purpose funding for local government includes a provision for the responsible Federal Minister to approve the principles adopted by State Grants Commissions for the disbursement of funds from the Federal Government for local government. These principles should reflect recognition of the need to adjust disbursements to provide an appropriate standard of service for people of non-English speaking background.

The non-government sector plays an important, and in some areas a predominant, role in the provision of community services, and the Federal Government injects considerable funding in the form of specific purpose payments into this area. As the Federal Government funds many of these services directly, the access and equity provisions should apply. Two factors affect the extent to which people of non-English speaking background, as users of general community services, will receive the same standard of service:

- the extent to which funding departments and authorities take account of equity considerations in the planning and implementation of programs;
- the extent to which agencies receiving funding deliver services in a way that makes

them accessible to people of non-English speaking background.

The Committee was struck both by the level of dissatisfaction with the responsiveness of non-ethnic agencies to clients and potential clients of non-English speaking background, and by the reluctance of funding bodies to support services proposed by ethnic agencies. Both areas need close attention as part of access and equity planning.

Specific funding programs for services to ethnic communities - particularly the Grant-in-Aid Scheme and Migrant Resource Centre Program - were the most frequent subject of interest raised with the Committee. The debate about the balance of 'general' and 'special' services, and the adoption of access and equity planning, appear to have generated a climate of uncertainty amongst proponents of these programs.

Specific ethnic programs in the voluntary sector can act as mechanisms for equity

- by assisting members of ethnic communities to make full use of the resources available to the community at large;
- by providing a vehicle for the delivery of resources to correct inequities; and
- by developing structures that allow members of ethnic communities to articulate needs and marshal the resources to meet them.

At the same time, a number of questions in this area need to be resolved: the relationship between ethnic and general community programs; the co-ordination of activities across programs and between levels of government; the goals of ethnic programs; and, deriving from this, the organisation of the programs and priorities within them.

### Community Relations

An equitable and just society cannot flourish in the absence of broad community support. Better

community relations can best be promoted by a two way process of participation and education. People from non-English speaking backgrounds need to have access to information about how Australia's political, social and economic systems work and to be encouraged to participate in decision-making, representational and other processes. This needs to be accompanied by structural and other changes to remove barriers to participation.

A major educational effort is also required to inform the Australian community about the nature of our multicultural society, to promote intercultural understanding, and to combat racist and discriminatory stereotypes, practices and beliefs. The education system and the media have important roles in this regard. Education in and for a multicultural society should be a priority in the school system. While education in itself cannot solve problems of intolerance and prejudice, it is vital in any strategy to effect attitudinal change. The two national broadcasters - ABC and SBS - can also give priority to the promotion of better community relations through their programming; while the licensing and complaints processes of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal are available to those who wish to influence commercial radio and television. There is also a need for concerted efforts to counteract racism, prejudice and intolerance through community education and awareness. The provision of mechanisms through which to seek to guarantee human rights in Australia is equally important. Legal sanctions can curb discriminatory actions, and affirmations in law can make rights explicit, as for example in the Bill of Rights Bill before Parliament.

### Cultural Support

Ethnic communities in Australia have sought to maintain the creative expression of their cultures for themselves and as part of their interaction with the broader community. They continue to support many of their own needs, providing resources for their own artistic endeavours, cultural and religious activities, and language

maintenance. Traditional non-government funders of cultural activities such as individual benefactors, private trusts and commercial groups are also showing an interest in directly assisting such activities. It is reasonable that ethnic groups also look to government to assist, in the same way that other cultural interests in Australia do.

Positive measures for such support stem in part from an equity approach. A fair share of resources, however, is often not enough in itself to support appropriately the maintenance of different cultural expressions, and to support language maintenance, which is of direct, personal relevance to those Australians who are speakers of community languages. Cultural support may need different and innovative types of arrangements to assist Australians of non-English speaking backgrounds to enjoy and maintain their cultures and languages.

The long-term transmission and development of the cultures and languages of ethnic groups in Australia cannot be guaranteed unless there are opportunities to learn those languages and cultures at all levels of the education system. It is also important that other publicly funded institutions with cultural responsibilities reflect in their collections, activities and allocation of resources the diversity of cultures within Australia.

### **Consultation and Co-ordination**

The processes of consultation and co-ordination cut across all elements of the strategy. Consultation is an important means by which governments can assist people to participate in the processes of policy development and program delivery. To be effective, consultation must be appropriately planned and productive for both sides involved. The Committee found considerable scepticism about the practice of consultation, but not its intrinsic worth.

Consultation between government and governed takes many legitimate forms in a parliamentary democracy. Many of these forms are based on established interests and networks and are thus

more likely to be accessible to the established, powerful and well-educated. While consultation has expanded dramatically in the last two decades, it is still open to the accusation that it disproportionately favours professional people of English-speaking backgrounds. Consultation with Australians of non-English speaking background is likely to be with those who approximate this norm most closely, namely well-educated professionals who are highly competent in English. There is an urgent need to widen the field of those formally consulted, and to use innovative means of consulting those who are often overlooked.

Structural and bureaucratic changes will have beneficial but limited impact on the effective participation of Australians of non-English speaking background in the decision-making processes. In a truly multicultural society there will be a much greater degree of participation in political parties, trade unions, employer organisations, voluntary associations and elected bodies than is currently evident for Australians of non-English speaking background. Such participation involves long and slow processes which governments can only marginally assist.

The Committee has emphasised the shared responsibility for the implementation of the strategy. To ensure effective action, and avoid overlaps, close co-ordination is needed at the policy level and at the level of service provision. This requires co-ordination of Federal and State action at the national level, between levels of government within each State, and between service providers from all sectors at the local level.

The obverse of the Committee's view that all service providers share responsibility for equitable and accessible services is that they should be equipped with the necessary planning data to adjust their services to the size and composition of immigrant intakes. This involves the timely provision of information about the size and composition of prospective immigration intakes, and the distribution of new arrivals.

Co-ordination of services is also essential between agencies at the Federal level. Theoretically, co-ordination will be enhanced where like functions are located in the one agency. Of the programs and services currently administered by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, a number might equally well be located within other Departments with similar functional responsibilities for the community generally. There was little interest in moving functions however, and some apprehension that immersing ethnic services in the 'mainstream' would lead to their submergence and eventual disappearance. At a time of budgetary stringency, other departments are cautious about accepting new functions which might lead to reallocations within existing resource limits. However, many of these arguments are from temporary expediency and in the long term, if the overseas born and their families are to cease being regarded as marginal, the argument for rationalising services within functional departments will remain. The effective reallocation of appropriate functions should be possible within the framework of strengthened access and equity planning.

Co-ordination of policy is important at the party political as well as at the administrative level. There is support in all the Parliamentary parties for the general principles underlying immigration, ethnic affairs and multiculturalism. The issues are of wide community significance, and involve action across a range of portfolio areas. Their co-ordination could be further enhanced by establishing a mechanism at Parliamentary level to promote and monitor the equitable participation of the overseas born in the community and the development of multiculturalism in Australia.

## **Recommendations**

The Committee has set out a wide-ranging plan for the future development of the Federal Government's role and policies. This involves diverse action on a number of fronts, and details appear throughout the report. We have

separated out as recommendations only some of these proposals: those we regard as most significant or most urgent in starting on the implementation of the plan.

These are set out below.

1. The development of Federal Government policies should be guided by the following principles:

- a) all members of the Australian community should have an equitable opportunity to participate in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the nation;
- b) all members of the Australian community should have equitable access to and an equitable share of the resources which governments manage on behalf of the community;
- c) all members of the Australian community should have the opportunity to participate in and influence the design and operation of government policies, programs and services; and
- d) all members of the Australian community should have the right, within the law, to enjoy their own culture, to practise their own religion, and to use their own language, and should respect the rights of others to their own culture, religion and language.

2. The strategy pursued by the Federal Government in assisting overseas born residents and their families to achieve their equitable participation in Australian society should contain the following elements:

- a) measures to equip people born overseas and their families with the basic resources which they require to function effectively and on an equitable basis in Australia;

- b) measures to achieve institutional change, so as to ensure that the organisations which make decisions about programs and services, and which implement them do so in an equitable manner;
- c) measures to promote good community relations, that is, social attitudes and behaviour which respect the rights of all; and
- d) measures to support the opportunity for people to maintain enjoy and develop their cultural heritage and identity.

The Federal Government should endeavour to promote this strategy at other levels of government and in the non-government sector.

3. To address the difficulties widely experienced with the recognition of overseas qualifications

- a) adequate resources should be provided to implement the recommendations of the Fry Report; and
- b) a Committee including representatives of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations and the Council on Overseas Professional Qualifications and other relevant parties should be set up to identify mechanisms to ensure that all entrants to Australia with qualifications have, and exercise, the option of having qualifications assessed prior to departure and are counselled about their likely employment prospects in Australia.

4. The Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, the Commonwealth Commission and the Department of Education should co-ordinate to develop an integrated strategy to bring about fundamental changes:

- a) in the skills and composition of the

teaching force; and

- b) in the curricula, teaching materials and practice, which are necessary to enable education systems to provide more equitably for children for whom English is a second language.

5. Administration of the Commonwealth English as a Second Language Program should provide for appropriate monitoring and evaluative mechanisms, to be included in resource agreements with State/Territory governments if the proposed transfer of the Program to general recurrent funding proceeds.

6. The Access and Equity Strategy of the Federal Government should be strengthened by:

- a) publicly releasing the access and equity plans of departments and authorities;
- b) requiring access and equity plans to be produced on a rolling triennial basis;
- c) designating officers at management level within departments and authorities to co-ordinate, promote and monitor the organisations' access and equity plans; and
- d) requiring all submissions to Cabinet to indicate what impact the proposals they contain will have on overseas-born residents.

7. The proposed Office of Ethnic Affairs should advise Federal departments and authorities on the uniform presentation of data on birthplace, ethnic origin and mother tongue for the measurement of access and equity.

8. As part of their access and equity planning, Federal government departments and authorities funding community services in the non-government sector should

- a) on the basis of data collected on actual and potential service users, set priorities in funding programs where

under-usage by people of non-English speaking background is suspected or evident;

- b) monitor the types of organisations receiving funds and, where appropriate, take measures to assist ethnic organisations to attract and manage grants; and
- c) develop appropriate measures to require and assist funded agencies to deliver their services in a way that makes them accessible to people of non-English speaking background.

9. The Federal Government should request the Commonwealth Grants Commission to undertake or commission a study to identify the direct and indirect costs of providing services to people of non-English speaking background.

10. The Federal Minister for Local Government should approach equivalent State Ministers to undertake a joint study to identify the direct and indirect costs of providing services to people of non-English speaking background.

11. The Federal Government should require the States to include within the principles for the allocation of funds by State Grants Commissions to local government recognition that the presence of people of non-English speaking background, particularly those not fluent in English, may be relevant to the determination of expenditure needs.

12. The Local Government Development Program should be funded on an ongoing basis to allow adequate time and resources to establish and test innovative projects to assist local governments to improve services for their residents of non-English speaking background; and the administering agency should encourage the development of submissions for funding under the Program of projects in areas of significant immigrant need.

13. All Federal Government agencies administering human services programs should

develop language services policies as an element of their access and equity planning, with costs to be absorbed within program and administrative appropriations.

14. A committee including DIEA, the Public Service Board and major human services departments should be set up to develop organisational and funding arrangements for changes to interpreting and translation services, the recruitment and deployment of bilingual staff, and training, standards, and conditions of employment for language services staff and contract workers.

15. The cost-sharing program for language services should be retained on an ongoing basis with a set appropriation. This should operate as a revolving fund into which the funds allocated to existing agreements revert as they terminate, so that new initiatives can be supported.

16. The Federal Government should progressively institute agency-user-pay arrangements with state government users of TIS.

17. State Government officials should be invited to set up a planning committee with Commonwealth officials to examine

- a) the staging and implementation of agency-user-pay arrangements;
- b) details of the future operation of the cost sharing program;
- c) ongoing support for NAATI; and
- d) arrangements for the ongoing co-ordination of Commonwealth and State language services.

18. TIS should be linked into a 008 system to allow callers from anywhere in Australia to use the service for the cost of a local call.

19. The Federal Government should refer to the Constitutional Commission a consideration of the appropriateness of including in the

Constitution a statement pertaining to fundamental human rights.

20. The education system should provide opportunities to sustain the development and transmission of community languages and cultures from pre-school to tertiary level.

21. The development and transmission of cultures and languages must be supported by equitable allocations of resources by government agencies with responsibilities in relevant fields such as the media, the arts, libraries, museums and archives; these should be encouraged to respond to the multicultural nature of Australia.

22. An Office of Ethnic Affairs should be established within the Immigration and Ethnic Affairs portfolio, reporting directly to the Minister to:

- a) advise departments and authorities on the development of plans to promote access and equity and to monitor their implementation;
- b) promote the co-ordination of departments' and authorities' access and equity measures;
- c) advise the Federal Government on the achievement of access and equity goals by departments and authorities, and report publicly on these matters;
- d) establish co-operation with appropriate state agencies; and
- e) assist the work of the proposed Parliamentary Committee on Ethnic Affairs and Multiculturalism.

The Office of Ethnic Affairs should be independently evaluated three years after it commences operations, the terms of reference of the assessment to include its portfolio location, and whether its work requires legislative support.

23. Responsibility for the Adult Migrant

Education Program should be transferred to the Department of Education through

- a) the immediate establishment of a transfer committee to plan the move;
- b) any necessary restructuring of the Education portfolio to enable it to co-ordinate its policies, programs and priorities as they relate to migrant and multicultural education; and
- c) the establishment of formal co-ordinating mechanisms for this purpose within the Education portfolio.

24. The Migrant Workers Rights Scheme should be transferred to the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations.

25. National annual bilateral consultations on the forward planning of the immigration program should include representatives of State government agencies whose responsibilities are affected by changing immigration intakes local governments and principal service providers in areas likely to be most affected by the intakes, and relevant ethnic organisations.

26. The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, in consultation with the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs and the Australian Bureau of Statistics should produce national and state birthplace group profiles including language and religion following each census and should produce annual updates on these groups at state and regional level based on intercensal immigration intake data for distribution to relevant federal, state local and non-government service providers.

27. As a pilot, two regional consultative committees comprising representatives of Federal, State and local government and non-government service providers within the relevant areas should be set up in Sydney and Melbourne to promote the co-ordination and provision of services to ethnic groups and the identification of gaps and overlaps in service provision. The

Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs should provide or fund a co-ordinator for each Committee.

28. The Government should approach the other parties in the House of Representatives with a view to establishing a Standing Committee on Ethnic Affairs and Multiculturalism to examine the participation of overseas-born residents and their families in the community and the general development and promotion of multiculturalism in Australia.

29. As part of Stage II of the Review, a Committee including representatives of the Stage I Committee, the community, the Public Service Board and Regional and Central Offices of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs should evaluate the functions resources, organisation and operations of the ethnic affairs and services areas of the Department's Regional Offices. The evaluation should include

- a) an examination of the various functions performed and the necessary revision of functions, priorities, organisational structures and resource allocation to implement language services, information and settlement support and other functions;
- b) the allocation of staff between the immigration and ethnic affairs functions;
- c) personnel practices with special reference to EEO policy;
- d) the extent and content of staff training, including cultural awareness training;
- e) consultative processes at regional level; and
- f) the extent and effectiveness of co-operation between regional offices and state government Ethnic Affairs Commissions or departments.

30. As part of Stage II of the Review, there

should be an evaluation of the effectiveness of arrangements for the settlement of refugees and entrants under the Special Humanitarian Program, taking account of

- a) the comparative levels of settlement support provided through migrant centres (hostels) and the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme;
- b) the need for and co-ordination of material support;
- c) forward planning for intakes in areas in which new arrivals will be settling; and
- d) the co-ordination of resources at all levels to assist settlement.

The evaluation should be conducted by a small committee comprising departmental, service provider, refugee group and Stage I Committee representatives.

31. As part of Stage II of the Review, a high level policy group, including a representative of the Stage I Committee, should be convened to review action underway or proposed to equalise the opportunities of the overseas born to obtain employment, taking account of training, retraining and English as a second language requirements. The Group should

- a) examine the large body of government reports and action taken to improve equity in the provision of labour market programs;
- b) assess the services offered by the Commonwealth Employment Service to job applicants and potential trainees of non-English speaking background;
- c) document continuing barriers to equity in the operation of and co-ordination between programs; and
- d) develop an integrated plan for future action.

The Committee should have co-optive powers given the wide field to be covered.

32. As part of Stage II of the Review, the Grant-in-Aid Scheme, the Migrant Resource Centre Program and the Migrant Project Subsidy Scheme should be evaluated as a package. The evaluation should address

- a) the consistency of the three programs with the diverse needs, aspirations and structures of ethnic groups;
- b) their relationship with other Commonwealth, State and local government and non-government programs and services;
- c) the clarification of program objectives;
- d) the need for greater flexibility in the purposes for which funding is provided;
- e) appropriate accountability and effectiveness measures;
- f) priorities for funding in line with the objectives identified;
- g) the merits of a move towards needs based planning; and
- h) the future location of administrative responsibility for the programs.

The evaluation should be conducted by a Committee the composition of which reflects the different sectors involved in the administration and operation of the programs. It should also include representation from the Stage I Committee.

## **Attachment A**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Preamble**

The Federal Government is committed to the promotion of the right of every resident of Australia's multicultural society to have equal access to and an equitable share of the resources which it manages on behalf of the whole community. At the same time, it is committed to a continuing program of immigration to Australia, which carries with it a special responsibility to facilitate the settlement of overseas-born residents and their families in Australia. The process of settlement encompasses various stages of adjustment and may be said to culminate in full and equal participation in Australian society.

#### **Terms of Reference**

The Review will be undertaken in two stages. Stage I will advise on the Federal Government's role in assisting overseas-born residents to achieve their equitable participation in Australian society. Stage II will evaluate key programs and services already in place.

In the conduct of Stage I, the Review shall:

- (a) propose appropriate principles to guide the development of the Federal Government's role and policies;
- (b) advise on the essential elements of, and priorities within, a strategy to implement the Government's role and policies over the next decade.

In so doing, the Review shall:

- (i) overview the needs of overseas-born residents across the stages of settlement;
- (ii) identify current arrangements to address these needs, noting any gaps

and overlap;

- (iii) advise on the nature of policies, programs and services required to meet these needs;
- (iv) make proposals for future structures, levels and modes of service delivery and for their co-ordination;
- (v) advise on appropriate methods for the examination, as Stage II of the Review, of key programs and services already in place, in relation to the broad principles and strategy developed by the Review;
- (vi) propose approaches to the on-going monitoring of the application of principles and the evaluation of the effectiveness of policies, programs and services.

The Review shall have regard to:

- the appropriate roles and activities of State, Territory and local government and the non-government sectors (including unions, employers, ethnic communities and community organisations);
- the need for wide consultations to include ethnic communities and their organisations, and other service providers; and
- likely constraints on resource availability.