

Cultural Diversity and Civic Participation in Queensland

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The author gratefully acknowledges the work of the Centre for Multicultural and Community Development team including: Mitra Khakbaz, Janine Drew, Amanda Coxall and Jean Bingham, and wishes to thank the members of the community who participated in the research process.



Executive Summary

Queensland is a culturally diverse state. At the time of the 2001 Census 33 per cent of the population of the state was either born overseas or had one parent born overseas. The Census also demonstrated that seventeen per cent of the population was born overseas and approximately nine per cent came from a non-English speaking country. Migration to Queensland has occurred over different periods of time with ethnic groups arriving under a range of business, skill, family reunion and humanitarian immigration programs.

The fostering of cultural and ethnic inclusivity throughout these social changes requires ongoing capacity building of individuals, groups, and institutions. The development of an active sense of citizenship of people with very diverse backgrounds can yield productive outcomes in social, cultural and economic returns. The “Smart State” motto for Queensland highlights the benefits of harnessing this diversity and potential.

This report examines how public sector agencies contribute to engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities within Queensland, and identifies:

- Barriers to engagement ;
- Current successful strategies for engagement with government; and
- Key areas to further enhance the capacity of government to respond to their needs and concerns in the future.

A review of literature reveals that migration impacts including, processes of settlement, access and equity, racism and citizenship issues, are fundamental considerations in understanding the ways in which different societies engage with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The Queensland Government has a range of relevant policies and operational guidelines for public sector agencies to engage communities. The key policies and strategies referred to in this study are the Queensland Multicultural Policy, The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society and the Community Engagement Strategy.

This report is based on findings from one-to-one interviews with key stakeholders, focus groups, and interviews with selected government agencies.

Twenty-one public service officials at local, state and Commonwealth Government were interviewed across Queensland. Twenty-eight interviews were conducted with community workers and multicultural organisations. One hundred and seventy-eight ethnically diverse people took part in the focus groups. The sampling of participants focused on areas with high concentrations of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds (CALD) communities including Brisbane, Logan, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Cairns and Mackay. The data were collected in 2003-2004 using bi-lingual researchers.

Findings suggest that a range of individuals in CALD communities do not engage with government due to:

- Communication barriers: including cross-cultural language barriers and jargon of government;
- Institutional barriers: including complexity of government systems, lack of information about procedures and processes of government, attitudes of the public service, lack of resources for appropriate forms of engagement, lack of access and technological barriers;
- Mistrust: including fear of authority, lack of relationship building, different perceptions about the role of government, mistrust of government, perceptions of tokenism, disillusionment based on past experience and the attitude that it is futile to be engaged with Government;
- Processes of Engagement: including both consultation fatigue and lack of consultation, lack of capacity and resources for engagement, discomfort of formal processes, problems with techniques of engagement (e.g. meetings, small groups, large groups) cross cultural issues of engagement, time-frames for engagement and role of gatekeepers; and
- Lack of Information: including multi-lingual material, problems with dissemination, cultural issues in information, language and literacy issues, use of jargon and timeliness of material.

The study proposes that engagement could be improved through:

- Language services;
- Designing culturally sensitive service delivery;
- Achieving inclusive processes for engagement;
- Training public sector officials to understand and work with cultural difference; and
- Developing relationships and partnerships with multicultural agencies.

Glossary of Terms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds
DIMIA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
MAQ	Multicultural Queensland Policy
MQP	Multicultural Queensland Policy
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
QLD	Queensland



Introduction

Australia is a country of immigrants and issues of immigration, ethnicity, cultural diversity and race have played an important role in debates about what it means to be an 'Australian'. Over six million migrants have come to Australia since the end of World War II. This mosaic of cultures has created a nation unique in its diverse composition.

Queensland is robust and dynamic state, rapidly becoming a place of first choice for settlement of people within Australia and overseas. This has altered the fabric of Queensland demography so that it is now the State with the third largest diversity level in Australia. At the time of the 2001 census, 21.9% (4,105,468) of Australians were born overseas, including 2,502,816 (13.3%) people born in a non-English speaking country. In Queensland, the total overseas born population numbered 603,797 (17%) and, of these, 261,297 (7.4%) were born in a non-English speaking country (ABS 2001 Census). Furthermore, at the time of the 2001 Census, 33 per cent of the population of the state was either overseas born or had one parent born overseas.

Immigrants to Queensland arrive under a number of categories: as business migrants with significant resources for investment, as skilled migrants with high levels of education and human capital, as family migrants forming the back bones of communities and support systems and as humanitarian entrants (including refugees) escaping war, persecution and traumatic circumstances.

The Queensland Government has adopted the motto for Queensland as the Smart State – for the ways in which we build our social, economic and cultural capital. A key part of our success is our global connectivity in many fields – including trade, tourism and niche services and export industries. Our success depends on the ability to harness all that cultural diversity can bring.

The world is a changing place in which religion, culture and identity play a central role. The impacts of international events and ideas are felt quite immediately in our own environments. Diversity and inclusivity have to form the backbone of every society. Issues relating to diversity now need to be confronted and acknowledged in more integral ways than ever before. Within this framework the Queensland Government has adopted a vision for Queensland:

The vision for Queensland is to promote the full and active participation of all Queenslanders in a society free of prejudice, discrimination and exclusion on the grounds of race, language, religion, ethnicity or culture (Multicultural Queensland Policy 1998)

Cultural Diversity

The vision for a just and inclusive society needs to come to terms with cultural diversity and cultural difference. Thus there are many social and economic challenges in fulfilling facing Queensland:

Challenges of an Inclusive Society: one that values diversity, fosters understanding and freedom from all kinds of discrimination and racism based on ethnicity, religion or language. Given the international events of September 11, Bali bombings, the promotion of harmonious and tolerant society becomes critical.

Challenges of Equality: where all Queenslanders, regardless of their ethnic, religious or linguistic backgrounds will be treated equally, be able to take part in all aspects of civic life, have access and equity to services and programs and be able to achieve equality of outcomes in all walks of life.

Challenges of Growing the Smart State: where cultural diversity will be used as an asset, advantaging Queensland through increases in skilled migration, utilising our diverse workforce in being innovative, using our many languages to gain trade advantage and in furthering productive diversity

Challenges of Community Capacity Building: to ensure that Queensland society is ready for the 21st century that is increasingly more globalised and interconnected to the world. The challenge is to develop social capital that will enable all Queenslanders to embrace diversity and multiculturalism in a rapidly changing environment. This includes the preservation of heritage, encouragement of language learning and development of appropriate community infrastructure. Social exclusion of minorities will mean that a significant proportion of our society do not actively take part in our society. Our challenge is to build a society in which all members of our community can be empowered to participate in all aspects of their lives, engage with government and become active citizens.

The ways in which Queensland meets these challenges rests in the ability of its social, economic and political institutions to embrace and harness the benefits of the diversity of the population. Only through realizing the full potential of each member of society, by ensuring integration of people into society, creating support systems and developing a conducive environment for participation in public affairs can Queensland progress along its aim of becoming the Smart State.

The Queensland public sector is one of the largest public institutions within the State. It employs a large number of people; it implements policies and legislation; and delivers a vast array of programs and services. It is a major player in regulating and determining the development of the State on key issues such as education, employment, trade, health, environment, community services and justice.

Contemporary governments now realize the importance of keeping in touch with the citizens it serves. Building trust and participation are key elements of agendas of many governments. The Queensland Government has responded to this through a proactive community engagement approach of those who are unengaged, disengaged and hardest to reach. CALD communities are amongst those who are less engaged with government due to many barriers both in government and communities. The key areas for engagement and diversity are:

- Information to CALD communities about better involvement with government through a range of mechanisms including on-line means, community cabinets etc.;
- Greater involvement of ethnic communities in the business of parliament and government;
- More effective policy development and program delivery which take account of diversity; and
- Working towards the reduction of barriers to participation for CALD communities.

As an important public institution, the response of the Queensland public sector to works is critical. It is vital that public policy and programs do not reflect only the views of a part of the population. Some of the key issues which this project will address include: the perspectives of diversity that inform the public sector agencies' work, how ethnic communities view the public sector agencies, how they relate to and connect with each other, what resources and skills public sector agencies have in working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and some of the examples of good practice that can be shared.



Aims of the Project

As outlined above, it is essential that public sector agencies engage with CALD communities to enhance policy decisions and for citizens and communities to be equipped to participate in the development of solutions for a sustainable future. This project has a number of specific aims:

- Identify barriers to engagement of people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with government;
- Identify characteristics of successful strategies for engagement of people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with government
- Identify key areas to be addressed to enhance the capacity of government to respond to the needs and concerns of people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Policy Context

As the project focuses on CALD engagement and the Queensland public sector it is important to understand the policy frameworks that form the background of the project. There are two key policy areas that are relevant to engagement of CALD communities and the Queensland public sector: Multicultural Queensland Policy and Community Engagement Strategy.

Multicultural Queensland Policy

The increasing diversity of Queensland population is recognized in the adoption of a multicultural policy which provides a broad framework for valuing and accepting diversity. Multiculturalism is a strategy for all Australians. Multiculturalism encourages all Australians to express, share and value one another's cultural heritage. Multiculturalism aims at ensuring that all Australians have equality of opportunity to benefit from, and contribute to, all aspects of society. Queensland is a dynamic and diverse state with a great variety of cultures, languages and religions. Multiculturalism in Queensland is about the continuing development of one cohesive, harmonious society from this diversity. The Government believes that cultural diversity is an economic and social benefit to the State and it encourages an environment that supports and rewards participation in the cultural, social and economic opportunities that Queensland offers.

The basis of Multicultural Queensland Policy (MQP) is a commitment to fostering an inclusive, cohesive and open society which promotes equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all

Queenslanders, regardless of their cultural, ethnic or religious background, gender, national origin, how long they have been here or where they live in the State.

The key principles of the Queensland Multicultural Policy (MQP) are:

- Access: All Queenslanders enjoy equitable access to services and programs;
- Participation: All Queenslanders enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities to participate in, contribute to and benefit from all aspects of life in Queensland; and
- Cohesion: All Queenslanders share responsibility for the continuing development of Queensland as a cohesive and harmonious society.

These principles of the MQP are supported by a range of strategies such as the Community Relations Plan, Queensland Government Language Services Policy, Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society and a significant multicultural funding program (\$3.4 million) to support cultural diversity.

Multicultural Queensland Policy obliges government agencies to:

- Implement the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society in the design, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of government services;
- Engage professional interpreters in circumstances where clients have difficulties communicating in English;
- Support staff to attend cross-cultural training courses;

- Consult in an inclusive way; and
- Departments are expected to report on implementation of strategies and performance in relation to the policy in Annual Reports.

The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society was adopted by the Australian Government in 1998 and requires that all Government agencies take into consideration the needs of people of culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] background in the planning and delivery of their services. The Charter applies not only to mainstream services provided by government, but also to services funded by government and provided by community organisations or the private sector. It outlines a range of principles regarding access, equity, communication, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability that agencies should consider when planning and delivering services (DIMIA, 1998). The Charter represents a concerted attempt to move away from access and equity as an 'add-on' to government services and towards building cultural diversity considerations into the core processes of service delivery (DIMIA, 2003b, p. 33).

Community Engagement

Involving citizens in government planning and decision making processes is crucial to the legitimacy and responsiveness of government, quality of policies and programs and the effectiveness of implementation. There is a growing expectation in modern democracies that government will facilitate the contribution of citizens and communities in planning and decision making processes. There is an international trend towards more participatory approaches to democratic governance.

The Queensland Government responded to the challenge of strengthening relations with citizens through the adoption of the Community Engagement Direction Statement.

Community Engagement refers to:

Arrangements for citizens and communities to participate in the processes used to make good policy and to deliver on programs and services. Making the engagement mutual means finding new ways for communities to have a working dialogue with government (Directions Statement, 2001, p.5)

The key principles which provide a framework for Community Engagement are:

- **Inclusiveness** – Connecting with those who are hardest to reach;
- **Reaching Out** – Changing the ways government and community work together;
- **Mutual Respect** - Listening, understanding and acting on experiences different from our own;
- **Integrity** - Engagement as a means of promoting integrity in the democratic processes of government; and
- **Affirming Diversity** – Changing the processes of government to incorporate diverse values and interests.

A key challenge for government is determining and delivering on appropriate levels of engagement as it is not possible or practical for every policy or issue to be subject to broad citizen engagement. The levels of engagement will vary along a continuum of information, consultation and active participation. A range of techniques and tools are available to undertake a community engagement process such as focus groups, citizens' juries, submissions, education programs and e-engagement using information and communication technologies.

The Queensland Government has adopted an integrated, multi-level approach to community engagement. It includes innovations and reforms in Parliament, Executive Government and across Queensland Government agencies. Key outcomes of this commitment will be:

- Citizens who are better informed about the government and how to access government services;
- Greater involvement of citizens and communities in the business of Parliament and government;
- More effective policies, programs and services which take account of diverse community needs and views;
- The reduction of barriers to participation so that those unaccustomed or disinclined to work with government can become more involved; and
- Increased community confidence and trust in government (Queensland Government 2003, p.2).



Methodology of Project

The nature of the project was very sensitive. The study needed to come to terms with a multitude of factors including issues of confidentiality, fear of speaking out against government, public officials not seeming to be critical of their own agency, language and cultural issues and understanding of concepts such as community engagement. The project was undertaken in four stages:

- **Stage I:** Literature Review including scan for issues, concepts, theories and relevant policy documents;
- **State II:** Interviews with selected community workers
- **Stage III:** Focus groups with selected ethnic communities
- **Stage IV:** Interviews with public service officials

The research involved one to one interviews with key stakeholders, including:

1. Focus groups with key questions with members of ethnic communities
2. Interviews with key people in communities such as leaders or community workers
3. Interviews with selected government agencies

Twenty-one public service officials at local, state and Commonwealth Government were interviewed across the state. Twenty-eight interviews were conducted with community workers or multicultural/ethnic organisations.

Please refer to Appendix A for a list of participants. One hundred and seventy-eight people from ethnic communities took part in focus groups in Brisbane, Mackay and Cairns from the following communities: Afghan, Kurd, Iranian, Thai, Filipino, Polish, Japanese, Samoan, PNG, Filipino, Greek. The participation in the focus group was determined by a number of factors:

- availability and willingness to participate in research;
- the respective size of the communities in Queensland;
- factors such as arrival; and
- the timelines of the project.

A 'snowball technique' was used to select participants for interviewing and surveying. Snowball sampling is defined as "a method for identifying and sampling or selecting the cases in a network. It is based on an analogy to a snowball, which begins small but becomes larger as it is rolled on wet snow and picks up additional snow. It begins with one or a few people or cases and spreads out on the basis of links to the initial cases." (Neuman, 1991:204) This method enabled the researcher to build a relevant sample starting from one or a few people.

The project geographic area included: Brisbane, Logan, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Cairns and Mackay.

Issues Identified in the Literature Review

Numerous issues are relevant in explaining why CALD communities do not always engage well with government. The literature in the context of ethnicity and migration is prolific and detailed - the relevant key points are highlighted below.

Migration Impacts

There are diverse explanations of why people move, including: to seek better economic opportunities and lifestyles; to find employment; to escape natural disasters, human atrocities including persecution, war, torture and violence; because of family-kinship-marriage connections; and/or a more general desire to participate in and contribute to a better society.

Migratory movements therefore arise out of the interaction of micro and macro factors. Macro structures refer to large-scale institutional factors including the political economy of the world market, interstate relationships and laws and the practices established of sending and receiving countries. Micro-structures are the informal social networks (e.g. personal relationships, friendships, community ties) developed by migrants themselves in order to cope with migration. As society becomes more complex no single cause is usually sufficient to explain why people decide to leave their country and settle in another. Migration policies are typically formed on the basis of a complex interaction of broader social changes (Rattansi 1995, Papastergiadis 2000) and the responses of individuals to those changes.

Migration experiences alter the understanding of society and shift interactions between people, political bodies and other institutions. While no government has ever set out to build an ethnically diverse society through immigration, labour recruitment policies often lead to the formation of ethnic minorities with far reaching consequences for social relations, public policies and international relations (Freeman & Jupp 1992).

Migration categories are fundamental to the way people adapt to the new environments. There is an important distinction to be made between humanitarian and non-humanitarian immigrants. Since 1991, Australia's Humanitarian Program has focused on people from the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. It is well documented that refugees from these regions are likely to have suffered extreme hardship due to conflict and war in their country of origin and may have spent considerable time in prisons and/or refugee camps

with limited access to basic human services, such as water, food and adequate protection from the elements. These people may also have had to endure significant psychological and physical abuse. Aristotle (2003) notes that "25 per cent of humanitarian entrants over the past decade have suffered extreme experiences of torture and trauma and another 38 per cent less severe experiences of trauma".

Australia's Migration Program is mainly divided into two categories: skilled (approximately 60% of migrant intake) and family migration (40% of intake). Although most migrants have high levels of post-school qualifications many are negatively impacted in the labour market. Immigrant workers have been affected in uneven and changing ways in the labour market. For example those who are family migrants tend to have lower wages than skilled migrants (Richardson et.al. 2002).

Bertone and Casey (2000) notes that transformations in employment relations present particular challenges to the NESB community. The problems arise from their historically disadvantaged position in the labour market; an increased focus on English communication in the context of devolution, teamwork and multi-skilling; on going problems with recognition of overseas skills and qualifications; lack of familiarity with Australian employment norms; and a range of refugee related problems (Bertone and Casey, 2000: 70-71).

Other factors include discrimination by employers against particular groups of immigrants; lack of support for English language acquisition; and, failure of the employment support networks to address issues facing CALD job-seekers (Collins et.al. 2000, D. Netto and Sohal 1999, Richardson 2002, Bertone and Casey 2000).

Settlement Issues

When people arrive in Australia there is a stage in which they adjust or settle. The term settlement refers to the period following an immigrant's arrival in a new country.

The National Population Council (1988) defined settlement as;

The process by which an immigrant establishes economic viability and social networks following immigration in order to contribute to, and make full use of, opportunities generally available in the receiving society.



Cox (1996) points out that “it is the period during which immigrants need, depending on each person’s situation, to find housing and a source of income, to develop or find an adequate means of communicating with existing residents, and to begin building a satisfactory personal and social life in their new environment” (Cox, 1996:1) In other words, settlement is a process of adjusting to a new society. It is about making a new start, finding your place in society, playing a role and feeling as much at home in the new place as in the country of origin.

Adelman et. al (1994) see settlement as promoting long-term equality of outcomes in relation to resources and power in society. They also believe that successful settlement relates to a stage of self-reliance within a culturally relevant support community. Wooden (1994) sees settlement as a process to engender a sense of security and optimism in immigrants.

However, the process of adjustment to a new society is an ongoing, dynamic process and involves the interface of the social, psychological and political dimensions of the person/group entering Australia and the society that receives them. Success or otherwise of settlement cannot be solely dependent upon the person/group immigrating. Due to the complex nature of the settlement process, the time of settlement varies for different people and groups.

The resettlement of each individual is a unique combination of interacting factors. These include the nature of social problems; welfare developments within the communities; and welfare developments in the host society, i.e. Australia.

Other variables are the background of the group or individual; nature of immigration; previous contact with Australia; attitudes on both sides (immigrants and Australians) prior to arrival; general prevailing host society attitudes; the nature of development of the group/individual; and, the economic status of the group/individual.

Often personal characteristics of migrants are considered in determining the success of settlement. The greater the differences between country of origin and Australia, the greater are the difficulties in integration and settlement. Personal qualities such as the ability to handle culture shock; emotional coping skills; the personality of the immigrant; and the ability to form relationships can all impact on settlement. In addition, basic skills such as level

of education also play a part in impacting upon the settlement process. These factors vary from person to person.

Jupp (1991) points out that other factors play a greater role in determining settlement. For example, the voluntary aspect of immigrating is an important contributor to successful settlement since this provides a degree of psychological stability and a congruency of expectations of about life in Australia. This is less likely to be the case for refugees due to the traumatic situations that they experience and the likelihood of receiving little or no information about Australia prior to arrival. The nature of migration and the decision-making process involved can have positive or negative consequences for successful settlement into Australian society.

The impression created by initial settlement experiences has a lasting impact on the settlement process. This includes what services are available, what attitudes are manifested towards the newly arrived and what government policies are in place. The settlement phase is greatly affected by the host society’s (i.e. Australia’s) reaction to newly arrived. The situation will determine the new class stratification, political system, power relations and the economic reality of newly arrived migrants.

The level of resources, the presence of family and the existence of supportive networks are also important in determining successful settlement. The presence of the migrant’s ethnic group in Australia, and the support of ethno-specific as well as mainstream structures and services is seen as fundamental in successful settlement (Wooden 1994, Cox 1996, Jupp 1991)

The settlement process is not a monolithic phenomenon. It is made up of four stages: The first of these is called the honeymoon stage. In this stage, people are fascinated by the new country they have entered and everything appears new and fantastic. The difficulties of living in the new environment are not yet known. This phase is affected by the similarity of the person’s background and culture to that of the new country. The greater the differences between the person’s country of origin and the country arrived in, then the longer this phase lasts. However, this phase is often much shorter than other phases, and depending on the individual can last from approximately one month to one year.

The second phase is the frustration phase. In this phase individuals are interacting with other members of the society, working through institutions and systems and coming face to face with the daily problems of living. This phase is also dependent on the background of the individual such as having the ability to speak the language of the country; prior experience with institutions; cultural similarities/differences; available support network and resources; and the coping skills and creativity of the person.

This period of time is often when characterised by frustration, anger, depression, withdrawal and resistance. It is in this phase that most people are referred to, or seek, professional assistance. This is a vulnerable stage and this is where the role of the professional in assisting a person to adjust is important. This phase is particularly testing of individuals who have had traumatic experiences prior to arrival, such as refugees. The duration of this phase again varies across individuals and is usually between two to five years. In cases where a person's coping skills have deteriorated due to post-traumatic stress, this phase can be of a longer duration.

The third phase is the coping phase. In this phase the person has worked out how things operate in the new society, what the cultural and behavioural norms are, and although they may not be comfortable, can operate within them. They also develop coping strategies such as using humour to ease the tensions of daily life, dealing with stress and anger and resolving conflict. The coping phase is when individuals begin to come out of their comfort zone and interact with others outside their own family or community. This is a phase when trust is beginning to be established for the society they have entered. The frustrations arising from daily living activities are much less in this stage. Again, this experience is dependent on the characteristics of the individual, and it usually takes much longer for refugees to reach this point.

The final phase is the adjustment phase. In this phase, the person is comfortable with their environment, and has developed bi-cultural competence in dealing with the society around them. Insecurity and self-identity issues are also usually resolved by this phase. This stage enables a wider range of social networks to be established and the person is more likely to be able to interact in different settings with ease. It is noted however that some people may never reach this phase. It is also

possible for people to relapse into earlier phases due to reoccurrence of trauma that has been experienced.

Generally all immigrants go through these stages of adaptation. Individual factors play a significant role in the duration of each phase of adaptation. Other significant external factors include the level of support services available, presence of family and community, societal attitudes and cultural/religious differences. Refugees generally have long periods in the frustration and coping stages, depending on their experiences, as there is a direct correlation between adaptation and trauma. It is noted that some refugees do not go through the first phase at all since they disassociate from life, feel guilty, angry and hold pessimistic views of life. This can prevent them from noticing differences and having emotions of fascination, joy and interest.

There are also gender differences in the settlement experience of male and female migrants, with women being more vulnerable to settlement and adjustment problems. Female immigrants and refugees generally have poorer English proficiency than men and are more likely to immigrate as dependents rather than in their own right. Compared with men, women are more likely to have limited economic means and can be subjected to traditional family constraints on behaviour. Separation from family and kin-based social support systems is a particularly important factor for women. Unfavourable employment and housing circumstances, prejudice and discrimination in the labour market and in the community also have disproportionate impacts on women (Wooden et.al. 1994).

An understanding of settlement and the process of adaptation is crucial to anyone working with immigrants and refugees. Appropriate interventions can be developed only through insight into these issues.



Access and Equity Issues

The Access and Equity Strategy began in 1985 by the Commonwealth as a policy response to service provision for people of non-English speaking background (NESB), and in 1989 it was extended to include all groups who may face barriers of race, religion, language or culture including Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, recognising the double disadvantage facing women and the ethnic disabled.

Access and equity were aspects of the principle of universalism in the delivery of government services, based on the concept of universal entitlement. The policy recognised that while services may be universally applicable they may not be equally accessible if they were uniformly designed and delivered, because the clientele may not be uniform. Universalism does not necessarily exclude the practice of targeted or ethno-specific services directed towards a specific clientele.

The concept of access implies that all who are entitled to a public service should face no barriers in applying for and utilizing services, entitlements and benefits available to the public generally.

Equity implies that all who are entitled to government provision should be equally likely to receive it if eligible. The achievement of equity means resolving the tension between formal equality and real difference through mechanisms designed to ensure participation of disadvantaged groups in decision-making and specific policies intended to break down barriers and meet varying needs and wants. Equity policies must be based on an understanding of group differences and their causes, and these differences must be seen as legitimate, and not as disabilities or deviance.

Studies indicate that immigrants and refugees face barriers to accessing services and resources throughout the settlement stages (Jupp 1991, Wooden 1994, Bertone and Casey 2000). In a study of recent arrivals Waxman outlined the constraints on access to services including:

Distrust of government agencies, minimal self-confidence, monolingualism of service sector, cultural issues, inappropriate health assessment due to marginalization of cross-cultural understanding,

unavailability of written information in primary language, shortages of interpreters and bilingual speakers, lack of knowledge of how the services operate, location of services, excessive use of services due to concentration of clients in particular geographical areas, competing with other Australians in accessing services (such as public housing), appropriateness of services, office hours, absence of legislative requirements in terms of access and equity provisions of services, clients' concerns over costs, and the rigidity of administration in applying regulations (more prominent in some government departments than others) [Waxman et al 1998:765].

Barriers comprise anything that results from incidental, structural or policy limitations in a department or agency. These could arise through a lack of initiatives designed to reach out to potential clients and/or a lack of sympathy or understanding by staff at key contact points.

On the part of a client or community, barriers include language difficulties, geographical isolation from service delivery points, cultural norms which do not include using government services, or lack of knowledge or understanding about services (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1992, 1994). Other factors include financial hardship, family and gender roles, and health concerns.

Racism

Community attitudes greatly influence the experience of achieving successful settlement and integration to Australian society. Lukomskyj (1994) argues that Australian attitudes towards immigrants reflect confusion, anxiety, skepticism, ambivalence, lack of knowledge and modern racism. Babacan (1998) confirmed that there was a significant correlation between settlement and racism. In this study it was found that people were frustrated, irritable, anxious and did not have a sense of belonging in an environment of racism and hostility. In recent times there has been a public demonisation of asylum-seekers that has increased the negative attitudes of the general population toward refugees (McMaster 2001, Mares 2001).

Zelinka (1996) defines racism as:

a belief in the superiority of one particular racial or ethnic group and, flowing from this, the exclusion of other groups from some or many aspects of society. This exclusion (and often exploitation) is seen as legitimate simply because of the difference or supposed inferiority of the other group's race, ethnicity or nationality (Zelinka, 1996:1).

Racism can be in the form of direct and indirect discrimination. Discrimination involves the practice which makes a distinction between people or groups and which advantages some over others. Direct racism is that which identifies overtly the individual or group to be singled out for less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, skin or hair colour, descent and ethnic or national origin. Indirect racism is that which does not identify a group by name, but rather operates covertly. That is, it may appear to be non-discriminatory but pursues action which only one group can satisfy. (Zelinka, 1996).

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) point out that indirect discrimination includes acts and policies that appear neutral or fair on the surface because they treat everyone in the same way but, in practice, have an adverse affect on a higher proportion of one racial or ethnic group. HREOC also identifies that indirect discrimination is not easily recognised, understood and may be difficult to prove (HREOC, 1996:6).

Vasta et.al. (1996) point to a distinction between informal or individual racism and institutional racism. They point out that the process of categorising certain groups or individuals as inferior involves the use of economic, social or political power and generally has the purpose of legitimating exploitation or exclusion. The dominant group constructs ideologies which construct 'difference' and their power is sustained by developing structures such as laws, policies and administrative practices. This type of racism is known as institutional racism (Vasta et al, 1996:31). Informal racism is more spontaneous racism in face- to- face situations by individuals.

Pettman (1992) claims that institutional racism is the outcome of people doing their jobs in key organisations and social arrangements such as the judiciary, parliament, health and educational systems. She argues that these decisions made by

powerful institutions impact on people's life chances (Pettman 1992). In regard to the operation of institutional racism Pettman states:

Institutions validate rules, roles and certain understandings about entitlements which are often seen as fair or universal, but which actually reflect and protect dominant social interests - through, for example, understandings about who is a good parent, a reliable tenant or borrower, or the best for the job. They are activated by bureaucrats, social workers, receptionists and so on, whose own perceptions, priorities and values are fused with cultural meaning that speak of their own personal histories and social location. Within particular constraints and in their own ways, they do their job. (Pettman, 1992:57-58)

There is ample evidence to show that racism impacts on life chances and social inclusion outcomes. Studies indicate that life chances of racialised minorities are adversely affected (Li 1998, Hollinsworth 1998, Bonnet 2000, Eberhardt and Fiske 1998, Mac an Ghaill 1999). Social signification based on "race and culture" facilitates social exclusion and hinders inclusion. Life chances can be impacted in the areas of occupational status and earning; educational achievement and social integration.

Citizenship

The Australian Government makes the following commitment to all Australians:

- The right to equity and freedom from barriers that derive from race, ethnicity or culture; and
- The right for all Australians to participate fully in our community and achieve their full potential, regardless of background.

At the same time all members of the Australian community are expected to:

- Have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, and to accept the basic structures and principles of Australian society;
- Observe the rule of law, tolerance, equality of opportunity,
- Parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as a national language, and equality of the sexes and the races; and
- Acknowledge that to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values (DIMIA, 2002: 11).



The notion of citizenship has transcended the process of naturalisation or being born in a country, and in progressive countries is now more “an interface between an individual and their commitment to their resident land and the consequent rights and responsibilities they have within that land” (Community Relations Commission, 2001).

Recent policy development has seen an increasing emphasis on civic values, and on Australian citizenship as a unifying symbol in a culturally and linguistically diverse nation. The normative definitions of citizenship are concerned with the civil, political and social responsibilities and participation of members of a nation. The broader views of citizenship place emphasis on citizen participation, membership and equality within a democratic community. This definition is broader than legal status.

The broad conceptualizations of citizenship are concerned with civic integration, which means being an equal citizen in a democratic system. Economic integration means having a job, having a valued economic function, being able to pay your way. Social integration means being able to avail oneself of the social services provided by the state. Interpersonal integration means having family and friends, neighbours and social networks to provide care and companionship and moral support when these are needed. All four systems are therefore, important. In a way the four systems are complementary: when one or two are weak the others need to be strong (Berghman, 1995: 19).

In Australia, it can be argued that discussion of citizenship has been unclear and lacking in focus. Entirely different concepts of citizenships tend to be discussed. For many, the discussion is about citizenship as a legal status, as to who is recognized by the state (Isin and Wood 1999). Much state activity and resources are devoted to keeping an exclusive nation state with large border

protection and detention measures (McMaster 2001). In countries such as Australia and Canada it is immigration law rather than citizenship law that forms the barrier to full membership of the nation (Dauvergne 2000).

The Australian Citizenship Act does not in itself confer any specific rights and does no more than describe who are citizens of Australia, how one may become a citizen or lose citizenship. As noted by Rubenstein (2002:284) a glaring omission from Australian citizenship discourse is the lack of an accessible statement of citizenship rights and responsibilities.

Jordens also argues that the formal status of citizenship is meaningless unless it is given substance by legislation and administrative procedures

...Commonwealth-funded settlement services are now restricted largely to humanitarian entrants... other categories of immigrants are ineligible to apply for social welfare benefits in the first two years following their arrival; and many previously free and unrestricted government services, such as those relating to language or employment, have been outsourced to private agencies or require fees. New instrumental incentives to become a citizen have been introduced – certain education benefits are now only available to citizens, and citizens are given priority in sponsoring the immigration of relatives (Jordens, 2000: 90).

Furthermore, a number of writers note that in Australia, people from non-English-speaking background are underrepresented not only as parliamentarians, but also in positions of power in the public service and the legal system (Jordens 2000, Castles 2002, Jupp 1999).

Issues of Engagement for CALD Communities- Findings of Project

The benefits of public involvement in the work of government have become accepted as an integral part of policy, planning and service delivery processes. In theory, it is about open government, making effective policy and demonstrating to stakeholders that government is responsive through listening and taking on board the views of the public.

Governments generally operate from the principles of risk aversion. Public involvement can be seen to bring about risks, including: raising expectations which cannot be met, the exposure of shortcomings to public, the inclusion of unrepresentative views, and general criticism or opposition. However, it is accepted that benefits far outweigh the risks and the risks can be managed through forward planning which sets clear parameters for public involvement and participation, determining timelines and ensuring wide participation to secure a range of views.

Public involvement benefits identified include:

- Allowing government-wide sources of information to tap into and broaden the evidence-base for policy making and planning;
- Alerting government to emerging issues, crisis and concerns which may have not have otherwise been picked up;
- Helping to assess and monitor the effectiveness of current programs and policies;
- Developing partnerships and relationships between communities and government;
- Building trust in government and helping to legitimize decisions taken;
- Developing a sense of self-determination in communities; and
- Helping to sharpen and refine policy and service delivery.

As outlined above, cultural diversity introduces a number of challenges and benefits. The challenges become difficult due to the dominance of particular frameworks within any society and the inflexibility of systems to other ways of doing. The previous literature review indicated that cultural diversity must be considered in the light of migration and settlement experiences; the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and in understanding societal and individual attitudes (which permeate our institutions) to people who are culturally different. Thus, engagement of culturally diverse people with government must be considered from a broad and holistic framework.

It is important to reiterate that diversity is strength in society. Societies that are open to cultural diversity are also innovative, flexible and can meet many challenges. There are numerous gains to be achieved through diversity and the engagement of culturally diverse people in all aspect of life (Bertone and Casey 2000, Freeman and Jupp 1992, Papastergiadis 2000).

Despite these benefits, the study found that many CALD communities did not engage with government. A number of barriers were identified, including communication barriers; institutional barriers; barriers to trust; engagement processes; and, access to information. Some of the issues raised need long- term systemic solutions, others can be addressed by small initiatives. Under each section there are recommendations for action that will assist government in engaging with communities of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Communication barriers

Communication is a key element of an engagement process. Significant information exchange takes place in any interaction process – both formal and informal. It is well documented that the inability to communicate (both written and oral) causes stress on all parties involved. This study has identified a number of issues in communication which act as barriers to engagement for people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds:

Lack of proficiency in spoken English

Barriers to engagement are:

- Lack of use of interpreters or incorrect language interpreters being booked
- Not being able to understand what is said in public meetings
- Inability to express views, needs and opinions
- Frustration with processes and miscommunication (direct and indirect methods of expression across cultures)
- Lack of ability to build relationships with public officials
- Loss of time
- Loss of motivation and energy to engage
- Not understanding jargon or technical terms
- Embarrassment and lack of confidence to engage with government



I went to one meeting by a government department but all I could do was to just sit there. I speak a little bit of English but I did not understand anything they said. I was not sure what they were doing or what I was supposed to do or say. There was no interpreter there. After sitting there for some time I left (female respondent, Gold Coast)

Lack of proficiency in written English

Barriers to engagement are:

- Missing out on vital information when presented in written form
- Lack of translated materials in other languages
- Not understanding jargon or technical terms
- Not understanding complex documents
- Inability to take part in processes which require written input (e.g. submissions, surveys, online consultation)
- Lack of ability to follow instructions where necessary
- Lack of literacy skills in own language as well as in English

Overall Communication Issues

Barriers to engagement are:

- Lack of cross-cultural communication skills in public officials hindering relationship building
- Poor dissemination of translated materials resulting in unengaged and uninformed citizens
- Miscommunication between citizens and public officials building mistrust and frustration
- Reluctance to use professional interpreters resulting in little or no engagement
- Lack of knowledge of how to use interpreters resulting in miscommunication and frustration for all parties

Suggested Actions For Improvement

The Queensland Government's Language Services Policy provides a framework for recognition of communication difficulties between clients who do not speak English well or at all and the agency officers. Under this Policy, the Queensland Government agencies will:

- Establish coordinated measures which address the communication difficulties of clients and facilitate clients' equitable access to programs, services and information; and
- Introduce strategies such as working with professional interpreters.

Practical Actions for Improvement by Agencies are:

- Develop a statement of recognition of diversity which places high priority on meeting language needs of citizens of non-English speaking backgrounds;
- Ensure appropriate data collection on country of birth and languages spoken for accuracy of assessment of communication needs;
- Identify strategies for use of professional interpreters (e.g. use group information sessions with one interpreter being booked);
- Engage in greater use of on-site interpreters where possible;
- Engage in better use of multi-media strategies (e.g. video conferencing, audio-visual material in other languages) as a means to reaching non-English speaking citizens;
- Employ bi-lingual aides to facilitate sessions where relevant;
- Identify language skills within agency through an audit of staff and develop accreditation or training for the use of these language skills;
- Use simple English and avoid jargon and acronyms;
- Develop training on cross-cultural communication and use of interpreters for staff; and
- Develop dissemination strategies for translated material (e.g. through community workers or leaders).

Institutional – Systemic Issues

A number of institutional and systemic issues emerged as a barrier to engagement. These included:

- Lack of understanding of the three tiers of government by communities, particularly the differences in responsibility between the State and the Commonwealth governments and differences between public service officials and elected representatives;
- Complexity of government systems;
- Lack of understanding and/or empathy by public officials about migration and settlement needs;
- Lack of resources for genuine engagement;
- Lack of recognition of overt and covert racism;
- Lack of accessibility of government systems:
 - **Physical access issues:** inconvenient location in the city, lack of knowledge of where departments are located, poor physical access in regional and remote areas, lack of outreach strategies, daunting nature of tall government offices, childcare and transport issues;
 - **Psychological access issues:** lack of confidence to connect with government agencies, lack of knowledge about appropriate behaviour with government officials and ministers, feelings of powerlessness and issues of fear and authority;
 - **Relational access issues:** attitudes of public officials, automated customer services, inability to utilize information and communication technology for contact; lack of awareness of culturally sensitive behaviour by officials and lack of individual contact;
 - **Procedural access issues:** complicated systems and processes, lack of clarity between different program components, conflicting information from agencies; expectation that people can access technology and have the skills to use it; lack of policies in relation to diversity and access and equity in agency; and
 - **Cultural access issues:** appropriateness of norms and values e.g. definition of family, child, older adult; communication and language issues, gender issues, types of services and programs developed reflect mainstream approaches and does not incorporate other perspectives, issues around times and appointments.

The department did not understand that there was no difference to me between my 18 year old or 7 old. They had different rules for different children which I do not know about (female respondent, Brisbane).

I ring up the department and get a machine. My son told me I am supposed to press some buttons but I do not know which ones. One day I got disconnected. It is too confusing for me (male respondent, Cairns).

I have a big problem. The only place that can help me is in Brisbane and I cannot afford to go, I am a pensioner (male respondent, Mackay).

The officer from the department talks to me as if I am both deaf and stupid (female respondent, Sunshine Coast).

Suggested Actions For Improvement

- Cross cultural training for staff and improved staff engagement techniques
- Identification of factors which make some groups more “hard to reach”
- Exposure of officials to ethnic communities (e.g. through community agencies, contact with specific groups such as refugees)
- Ensure diversity of workforce to create an environment which fosters attitudinal change
- Provision of outreach where possible (e.g. holding meetings in community halls)
- Provision of appropriate communication strategies
- Dissemination of information in simple English
- Development of a customer services audit
- Develop strategies for de-mystifying the public sector (information, communication, public relations)
- Have open days for departments for ethnic communities
- Minimise use of technology for vulnerable communities
- Simplify processes and systems
- Use face-to-face settings, more informal engagement
- Dedicate staff and resources to address needs of marginalized groups
- Build capacity: explain meeting processes, explain organisational structures, develop long term funding programs



- Expose public service officials to wider range of organizational environments and methods of practice
- Overcome access barriers: provide child care, transport, appropriate food

Institutional Trust

Lack of trust is a significant barrier to involving diverse groups in public involvement processes. A range of issues were identified as barriers to engagement by ethnic communities in relation to the role of government:

- Fear of authority, fear of being involved in government processes, negative perception of the concept of government
- Government not seen as responsive
- Perceptions of lack of commitment by government
- Tokenism, lack of interest in diversity issues, window dressing
- Lack of accountability
- Futility of involvement, will not make impact on outcomes
- Disillusionment based on past experience with government
- Feelings of powerlessness, decision making beyond their reach
- Frustration with political processes
- Inflexible systems
- Attitudes of public officials and politicians to ethnic communities
- Silencing dissent, not hearing criticism

What is the point in going to yet another consultation, nothing comes out of it (community leader, Brisbane)

I do not want to seem ungrateful or to complain (female respondent, Gold Coast)

Suggested Actions For Improvement

- Personalisation of the broad public sector programs and systems where possible
- Active de-mystification about the role of the state, open and transparent processes, identify organizational culture and tradition
- Responsive key projects on issues raised with appropriate follow up
- Allocate project officers to selected communities to ensure continuity of contact and relationship building
- Focus on outcome goals which go beyond the output targets
- Acknowledge the limitation of powers and scope for action at the outset, define timelines and resources
- Develop newer forms of bureaucratic involvement and renewal around key projects, that is break down standardized program
- Acknowledge the need for power sharing and decision-making by communities and where possible develop projects which enable active participation
- Develop ways to incorporate local and specific knowledge into policy making and program design and delivery.

Processes of Engagement Issues

The processes involved in engagement are equally important as the reasons for wanting citizen participation. Key issues were raised in terms of capacity of communities or individuals to engage. A number of problems were identified with the methods of engagement:

- Barriers of some methods used such as those that rely on IT, written communication or in English only
- Problems with consultation: consultation fatigue, no feedback on input received and decisions made, perception that consultation is rubber stamping when the decisions have already been made, quick nature of consultation which does not allow for building partnerships or relationships;
- Capacity for engagement: lack of confidence to express views publicly; lack of familiarity with meeting processes, lack of skills in conflict resolution

- Discomfort in formal settings which were seen as inflexible and mechanistic procedures, as well as the requirement to complete extensive paperwork without support
- Difficulties with techniques and methods such as role plays, brainstorming and ice breaker exercises involving devolving personal information
- The discussion of certain issues which are considered sensitive across cultures
- Cross cultural issues in engagement: eg. for some groups mixed sex events are unsuitable, in some groups young people cannot express opinion in front of elders
- Lack of resource officers to support them through engagement
- Stigma attached to engagement around sensitive issues e.g. female genital mutilation, domestic violence, mental illness.
- Reliance on gate keepers or key people in the community who may not represent the views of individuals but set the framework for engagement or response
- Short time frames of engagement

Suggested Actions For Improvement

- Identify those who are hardest to reach within ethnic communities and the reasons why that is so
- Acknowledge at the outset that, as with any group, not all individuals in that community will be able to respond through one method
- Develop engagement strategies using multiple methods
- Identify opportunities for informal forums
- Identify who are the people most likely to respond using a particular method of engagement
- Develop different communication methods (e.g. ethnic radio, translated material, word of mouth, brokers)
- Develop a pool of resources and people with skills in diversity issues may facilitate and encourage participation and engagement
- Recognise the following:
 - Those who respond to engagement are already in groups or organizations and are not hardest to reach

- Not all groups are formally constituted, there may be many informal interest groups within a community (e.g. women's groups, prayer groups)
- Ethnic organizations do not necessarily represent the views of all the community
- Allow enough time: interpreting takes longer, building trust takes time
- Build capacity: networks, support staff, information, resources
- Work to develop and encourage local leadership
- Avoid the short-term appointment of a single CALD representative to boards (often viewed as tokenism), where possible involve a number of people from diverse communities

Information Issues

Access to information has been identified as the first step in building the capacity of marginalized communities to participate and be involved in any element of civic society. However there are numerous problems with information in terms of content, format and dissemination. Some of these have been identified in this research and acts as a barrier to engagement, including:

- Too much information
- Format and layout not user friendly
- Information not being available in different languages and in different media (written, audio)
- People not understanding the significance of the information materials
- The use of foreign concepts and jargon preventing understanding
- A failure to see the relevance of material to people's own circumstances
- Information not being timely, received too late
- Distribution not appropriate to where the community is likely to see it

They gave me a piece of paper but I cannot read either in English or in my own language (female respondent, Brisbane).

If I had received the right information and guidance I would have developed my career differently, now I feel stuck in this job for which I am overqualified (female respondent, Cairns).



Suggested Actions For Improvement

- Identify where the community obtains information from
- Identify the special information needs of particular sub-groups e.g. women, refugees, newly arrived migrants, older migrants and youth.
- Determine the likely source where this community can see/receive/hear information
- Understand the suitability of format of information (e.g. written, one to one, multimedia, easy to follow, user friendly lay-out, less bureaucratic, pictures or diagrams, free of jargon)
- Identify if there is any specialist media for the community (e.g. ethnic newspapers, community radio)
- Use multiple sources for dissemination
- Provide briefing sessions to key community agencies on the information
- Use other events to distribute the information e.g. ethnic national days, festivals, and other community events
- Provide resource people to go through the information with individuals face to face where possible

Summary of Actions for Better Engagement for Government

For better engagement with CALD communities changes need to be made in three key areas within government:

- Relationships: How do people interact with each other, communication patterns, power issues
- Mindsets: what are the attitudes and open or unspoken norms; and
- Organisations: Are the structures facilitative, do the structures disempower clients or encourage participation by staff, clients and communities. What forms of communication are there, what policies exist, what is the implementation, what values/philosophies are dominant, how diverse is the staff base, who are the managers (are people from culturally diverse backgrounds visible)

At an officer level

- Start with knowing your community and clients, where do they come from, what are their cultural backgrounds, what are their histories and what are their “domains of values” e.g. individual vs collective
- Separate culture from personality issues (somewhat dependent)
- Understand the context of Immigration: for example the possible trauma of a refugee experience. Understand what settlement stage people are at. Note the importance of the dominant context e.g. what the impact of racism, not speaking English or speaking with an accent can have at an individual level
- Recognise your own culture, values and how this is manifested in your work and behaviour. Culture is the learned, shared patterns of belief, values, attitudes and behaviours characteristic of society. We all have values, judgements and biases. Identify how we bring that into our work.
- Note the intersubjectivity of exchanges: The traditional ‘objective’ method of service delivery is not possible. We act from our being which is culturally and socially determined. Our convictions, beliefs and behaviour come from our socialization. We are also transformed by experience and relationships. Depending on the situation, exchange and learning can take place between client/community but in more formal situations this may not occur.
- Utilise effective communication strategies, avoiding the use of jargon and slang, and using the skills of interpreters. Be aware of cultural norms in communication (gender, politeness)
- What are power messages you are sending out? Are they dominating approaches, directive, condescending or loud and perceived as shouting?
- What methods are you using to empower clients/communities: in terms of information provision the use of cultural materials, not being fixed by a particular way of doing things, hearing the issues raised by the person.



At a Program Level

- Is diversity recognised as an issue (Omission, dumping)?
- Is appropriate ethnicity data recorded and used in service planning?
- What are the barriers in program design (particular values, assumptions, and processes) that prevent access?
- What has the agency undertaken to encourage access: psychological, physical, emotional, processes (formal and informal)?
- Staffing of agencies (are there people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds), what recruitment process are there to encourage applicants from culturally diverse backgrounds. (Problems with the merit principle as they are culturally determined e.g. self promotion and presentation). Once recruited are their language and cultural skills utilised?
- Is there are appropriate cross- cultural training?
- Does the agency have policies relating to diversity (e.g. valuing of diversity) appropriate resources to support the policy eg. Use of interpreters?
- What input is there from customers into program design and delivery?
- What mechanism are in place for complaints?

Improving Service Delivery

- Targeted local solutions (taking account of local issue, community, history, culture and specifics of the situation)
- Building partnerships
- Building new relationships, fostering cohesive relationships which shift mindsets through interaction and experience
- Involve community/customer in decision making in program design and delivery (not in a token manner)
- Learning and acknowledging experiences of migrants and refugees
- Accepting social barriers and hardships faced by migrants in the context of wider society e.g. racism

Actions for the Multicultural Community Sector

The multicultural sector is organized and funded by both State and Commonwealth Governments. There are multicultural community development and advocacy workers, settlement workers, case workers and positions related to particular issues such as domestic violence, ageing, youth and child care. In addition there are funded and unfunded ethnic community agencies and community leaders. These organizations are pivotal in the dissemination of information to ethnic communities and in connecting individuals and groups to the broader social processes including the processes of government.

Although these agencies work to deliver outcomes against their funding or their constitutions there is the potential for a more proactive role for engagement with government. Usually public sector agencies engage with multicultural and ethnic agency leaders or workers and do not hear from client, communities or individuals. It is possible to develop engagement processes in which government can interact more directly with communities and individuals. Some suggested actions for improvement in engagement are:

- More coordinated response within and across funded workers and community leaders around key issues (pooling of ideas, resources, effort, information, skill);
- Development of mechanisms for government to hear directly from communities, clients, membership of ethnic organizations.
- Identifying what works: shared approaches, carved up approaches, other combinations;
- Provision of strategic advice to government a select number of key issues (rather than a shopping list);
- Utilising case studies of individual's experiences to assist in policy and program design and development;
- Greater liaison with MAQ about what may work and to use it as a resource for advocacy within Queensland public sector; and
- Greater effort to build capacity in the sector so that there are many voices



Conclusion

The outcomes of this study indicate five interrelated key areas that can be addressed to enhance the capacity of government to respond to the needs and concerns of people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They are cross agency collaboration, consultation, community capacity building, training and valuing diversity.

Cross agency collaboration can be facilitated by a whole-of-government commitment to comprehensively implement existing government policies with respect to engagement of people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds at policy and operational levels of government. Cross-agency coordination and collaboration in policy development; program development and implementation will assist in avoiding duplication, ensure the best use of limited resources, and encourage creativity and innovation in responding to the needs and concerns of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Genuine consultation with culturally and linguistically diverse communities would assist in breaking down the formality, fear of bureaucracy and authority, and the 'myths' about some agencies. These processes would build trust and collaboration and make culturally and linguistically diverse communities feel valued and respected. Importantly, they would facilitate government getting to know the people who are often most affected by policy decisions. The early involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in government decision-making processes is vital to the development of timely and appropriate strategies, particularly in regional areas where resources are limited. The provision of feedback is also an important part of that process.

Genuine consultation, however, cannot occur unless culturally and linguistically diverse communities have the capacity to participate in such processes. Genuine consultation cannot occur in the face of barriers such as language difficulties, unfamiliarity with and complexity of government policies and processes, and a lack of understanding of how to participate. Better use can be made of dedicated multicultural community workers and existing agency staff of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to create meaningful links with communities, identify opportunities for participation, and assist in building long-term capacity to participate within culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Extensive cultural sensitisation-awareness training is required to enhance the capacity of decision-makers and service providers at all levels of government – political and bureaucratic - to respond effectively to the needs and concerns of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Involving people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the provision of training would also provide an invaluable opportunity to enhance their understanding of government and develop their capacity to engage more effectively with government.

The development and implementation of more proactive, and less reactive, approaches in addressing with the needs and concerns of culturally and linguistically diverse communities can be achieved by valuing existing diversity within the workforce and community. Encouraging diversity in the workforces creates an environment conducive to building relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, fosters attitudinal change, and contributes to the elimination racism.

The need for dedicated staffing and other resources to address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, in particular new and emerging communities, is clear. However, the time-limited nature of this funding does not encourage proactive and long-term planning. It also fosters a culture of competitiveness, rather than collaboration, among agencies for scarce resources available to assist in meeting the needs of a common client base. The provision of longer term funding, for example five years, for core settlement and related services would provide opportunity to not only proactively plan but also realistically review and evaluate the outcomes of programs aimed at addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

The following government and community based agencies participated in this study.

Brisbane

Access Services Inc. Logan City
Anglicare
Australian Federal Police
Commission for Children and Young People
Department of Families
Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
Diversicare
Diversity in Childcare QLD
Education Queensland
Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland
Immigrant Women's Support Service
Islamic Women's Association
Local Government Association of Queensland
Multicultural Affairs Queensland
Multicultural Development Association
Multi-Link Logan City
Queensland Council of Social Services
Queensland Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma
Refugee Claimant Centre
Romero Centre
Samoan Community Advisory Council
South Brisbane Immigration and Community Legal Service
Transcultural Mental Health Service
Youth Affairs Network Queensland

Regional Areas

Caboolture Shire Council
Caloundra City Council – Youth Support Service
Centrelink - Caboolture
Centrelink - Cairns
Children's Contact Service Mackay
CHR Mackay
CHR Job Network Mackay
Community Settlement Services Mackay
Department of Corrective Services - Maroochydore
Department of Emergency Services – Caloundra
Department of Employment and Training - Mackay
Disability Services QLD - Cairns
Diversicare – Nambour
Domestic Violence Resource Service Mackay and Region
George Street Neighbourhood Centre - Mackay
Intensive English Unit – Nambour State High School
Mackay City Council
Mackay Regional Council for Social Development
Maroochy Shire Council – Community and Cultural Planning
Maroochydore Neighbourhood Centre
Migrant Employment Service - Cairns
Migrant Settlement Service - Cairns
Multicultural Association of Caboolture Shire
Office of Women - Nambour
Queensland Department of Housing
Queensland Housing – Cairns
St Johns – Cairns
Student Support Unit, TAFE - Mackay

Focus Groups:

- Afghan, Kurd, Iranian, Sudanese communities in Brisbane
- Thai and Filipino communities in Mackay
- Polish, Japanese, Samoan, PNG, Filipino, Greek communities in Cairns