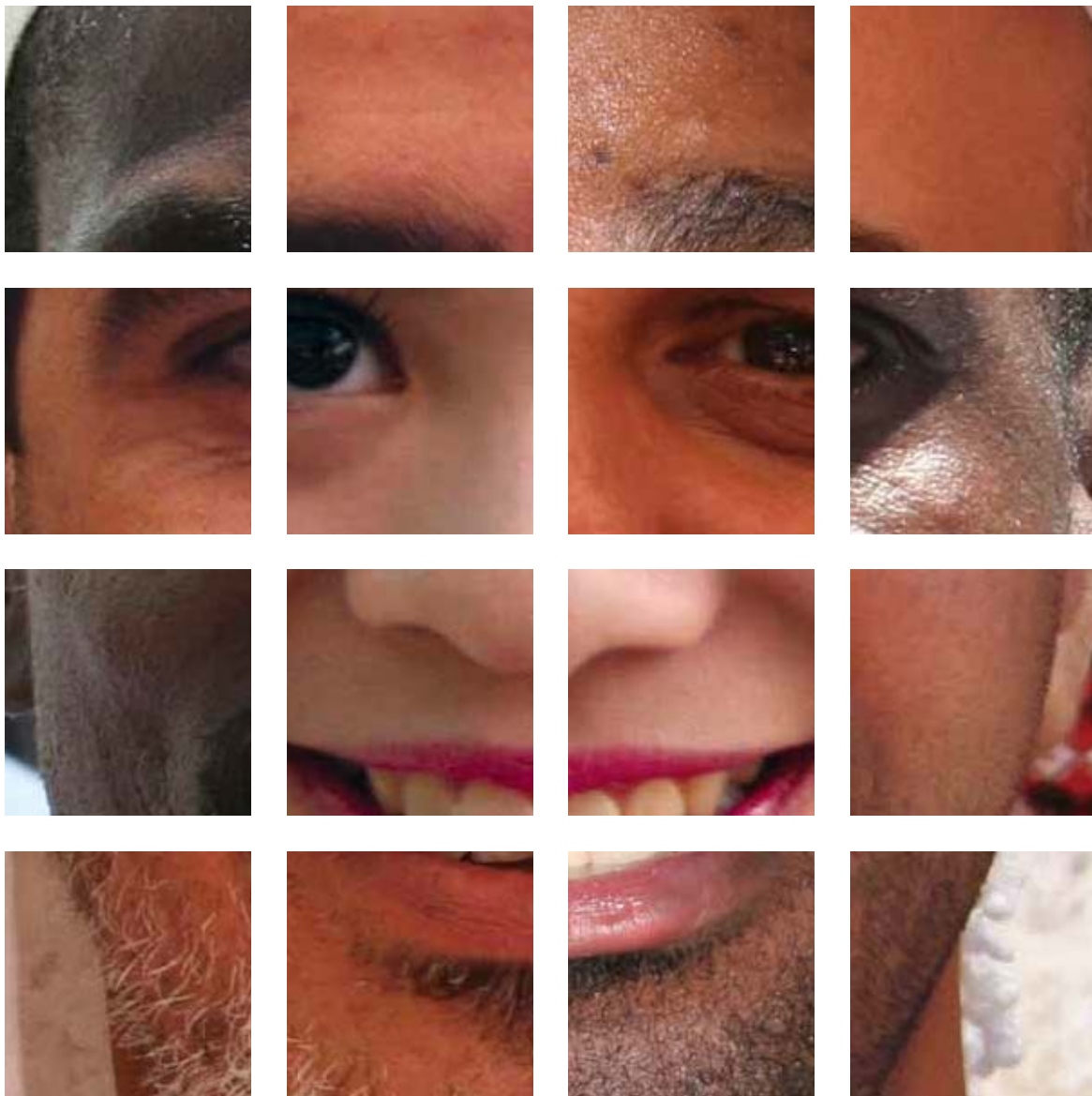


# Access & Equity

for a multicultural Australia



Inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian Government services  
to Australia's culturally & linguistically diverse population

**Access and Equity Inquiry Panel**  
**June 2012**

# Access & Equity

for a multicultural Australia


Inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian Government services  
to Australia's culturally & linguistically diverse population

**Access and Equity Inquiry Panel**  
**June 2012**

## Copyright

© Commonwealth of Australia 2012

All material presented in this report is provided under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Derivative Works (BY-ND) 3.0 Australia licence, with the exception of:

- photographs and images; and
- graphic designs.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website, as is the full legal code for the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Derivative Works (BY-ND) 3.0 Australia

See: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/au/>



## Attribution

Material obtained from report is to be attributed to this Department as:

- source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship; or
- source: DIAC.

## Contact

For all copyright enquiries please use the following contact details:

National Communications Branch

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

PO Box 25

BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Telephone: 02 6264 2233

Email: [comms@immi.gov.au](mailto:comms@immi.gov.au)

ISBN: 987-1-921662-07-2 (print)

## Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>List of recommendations</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Setting the context</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Access and Equity Inquiry 2011–12	11
1.2 Terms of reference	12
1.3 Understanding Access and Equity policy	12
1.4 History of Access and Equity policy	14
1.5 Access and Equity in other jurisdictions	16
1.6 Current governance and accountability arrangements	17
1.7 The Panel’s approach to the Inquiry	18
1.8 Structure of this report	21
<b>Chapter 2. Diverse Australia now and into the future</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Australia today	23
2.3 Diversity into the future	26
2.4 Target groups for Access and Equity	28
<b>Chapter 3. Current responsiveness of Australian Government agencies and how to improve it</b>	<b>34</b>
3.1 Introduction	35
3.2 Overview	35
3.3 Access and Equity into the future	37
3.4 Policy	38
3.5 Ensuring effective implementation	42
3.6 Upgrading governance and accountability	52
<b>Case studies and personal glimpses</b>	<b>59</b>

**Contents**

**Chapter 4. Access and Equity and other social policies 64**

4.1 Introduction 65

4.2 Social Inclusion Agenda 65

4.3 National Disability Strategy 68

4.4 Family law reform 69

4.5 Creating linkages between new social policy and Access and Equity 70

**Attachment 1: Events in the history of the Australian Government’s Access and Equity policy 72**

**Attachment 2: State and territory approaches to Access and Equity 74**

**Attachment 3: List of organisations and individuals making submissions to the Inquiry 75**

**Attachment 4: Access and Equity Framework: 2006 78**

**Attachment 5: Multicultural Access and Equity: Recommended Approach 80**

Senator the Hon Kate Lundy  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

On behalf of the Access and Equity Inquiry Panel, I am pleased to present this report 'Access and Equity for a multicultural Australia' to the Australian Government.

Access and Equity policy has been an important cornerstone at the Australian Government level in the effective working of Australia's multicultural society for decades. It will continue to be of central relevance given the diversity of our existing population and likely immigration trends over the coming decades.

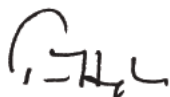
The Panel received a very strong response from the community to its Inquiry, with 136 written submissions from a broad spread of sources, including Australian Government, state and local government agencies, community organisations and individuals. They conveyed a clear message that Access and Equity policy, implementation and practices need to be rejuvenated in order for the policy to remain effective in the modern administrative environment. Access and Equity also needs to be communicated more effectively and better interlinked with current social policies.

The Panel's report contains 20 recommendations which will assist the Government in achieving these objectives.

I would like to record my thanks to my fellow Panel members and to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship Secretariat to the Inquiry for their comprehensive support to the Panel.

I would also like to thank Professor Veronica Taylor and the Regulatory Institutions Network of the Australian National University for hosting me during the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Hughes'.

Peter Hughes PSM  
Chair, Access and Equity Inquiry Panel  
June 2012



*Clockwise: Judge Rauf Soulio, Peter Hughes (Chair), Garry Fleming (DIAC), Pino Migliorino, Maria Dimopoulos and Jatinder Kaur.*

### **The Panel comprised:**

- Mr Peter Hughes PSM (Chair), Visitor at the Regulatory Institutions Network of the Australian National University, Canberra, and a former Deputy Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- Ms Maria Dimopoulos, a consultant in cultural awareness, workplace diversity and cultural change in Melbourne who is a member of Australian Lawyers for Human Rights and International Commission of Jurists and recipient of an Amnesty International Human Rights Award
- Ms Jatinder Kaur, B.A.(Psy), M. Soc. Admin., a cultural diversity consultant in Queensland, specialising in working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
- Mr Pino Migliorino, Chair of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia who has nearly three decades of private and public sector involvement in multicultural affairs and ethnic community activities in New South Wales
- Judge Rauf Soulio, Chair of the Australian Multicultural Council (*ex officio* member of the Panel) who is a Judge of the District Court of South Australia, a member of the Council for the Order of Australia and Chair of the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia

# Executive Summary

## Context

This Inquiry flows from the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council report, *The People of Australia*, which provided the basis for Australia's Multicultural Policy announced by the Australian Government in 2011.

Based on concerns expressed in the Advisory Council's report relating to accessibility of Australian government programs and services for Australians of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, the then Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Senator the Hon Kate Lundy, in November 2011, announced the establishment of an Access and Equity Inquiry Panel to examine the issue.

The terms of reference were to:

1. inquire into the Australian Government's current approach to Access and Equity and its implementation; and
2. provide prioritised recommendations to the government for improving the responsiveness of Australian government services to a culturally and linguistically diverse population.

Access and Equity policy, which originated in the late 1970s in response to rapid diversification of the migration program, gives effect to the principle that Australian government services should be accessible to all Australians who are eligible for them, be responsive to their needs and deliver equitable outcomes. While this principle is applicable to all Australians, this Inquiry focuses on the interaction between the Australian Government and Australia's CALD population.

Portfolio Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries in the Immigration and Citizenship portfolio have had oversight responsibility for the policy since 1996, supported by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in its various forms. All Australian government agencies are required to implement Access and Equity policy which is currently expressed through an Access and Equity Strategy and Framework.

In conducting the Inquiry, the Panel made a broad public call for submissions, held face-to-face consultations in a small number of selected locations and undertook face-to-face meetings with senior officials from key Australian government agencies. Some 136 submissions were received from a wide variety of sources, including Australian government agencies, state and territory government agencies, local government agencies, peak bodies, community organisations and individuals.

## Diverse Australia

The need for an effective Access and Equity policy is closely related to the fabric of Australian society.

Australia, based on many underlying Indigenous cultures and its more recent status as a country of immigration, is already a culturally and linguistically diverse nation. This diversity has brought many social and economic benefits to the country and provided it with a more sophisticated level of connection to the world. Diversity is likely to increase in the future and will help Australia make its place in the Asian Century.

Australia's resident population of 21.5 million people includes about 5.3 million people born overseas. Some 47 per cent of Australians were born overseas or have at least one overseas-born parent. Australians identify with more than 300 ancestries.

Eight of the top 10 countries of birth of Australia's overseas born population are countries whose first language is not English (the 10, in order, are United Kingdom, New Zealand, China, India, Italy, Vietnam, Philippines, South Africa, Malaysia and Germany).

Over 260 different languages are spoken in Australia today, including Indigenous languages, and this linguistic diversity has brought many benefits. Some 19 per cent of the total population speak a language other than English at home. However, 17 per cent of these cannot speak English well or at all.

Current permanent and temporary entry programs are running at, or near, record levels and source countries, whose first language is not English, are becoming even more prominent. For example, looking at permanent additions to Australia's population in 2010–11, China ranks first, India third and the United Kingdom fourth. Similar trends are reflected in temporary entry programs which have grown rapidly over the last decade.

In practice, many migrants to Australia, past and present, from CALD backgrounds have strong English-language skills and are able to interact with Australian government agencies within the standard approaches that those agencies apply in the interacting with the broader community. However, there needs to be a greater level of Australian government agency responsiveness to the particular circumstances of some migrants—for example, migrants with low levels of English proficiency; refugees and humanitarian entrants; visibly different migrants; newly arrived communities and individuals with low levels of knowledge of the Australian system; and other migrants experiencing difficulties in accessing services based on age, gender, disability, youth, or their origin in collectivist cultures. These groups are the targets of Access and Equity policy.

Responsiveness to their particular circumstances and needs speeds full participation into Australian society; lack of responsiveness leads to exclusion and frustration—poor employment, education, health and family outcomes—possibly for generations.

## Responsiveness of Australian government agencies

Submissions to the Inquiry gave a good insight into the responsiveness of the Australian Government in its interactions with people from CALD backgrounds through 20 departments of state and around 90 smaller agencies.

They highlighted the fact that, in the current administrative environment, services are less likely to be delivered directly by Australian government agencies and more likely to be delivered through funding partnerships with state and territory governments or through contracted service providers.

The strong message the Panel received from the submissions process and face-to-face meetings was that Access and Equity policy remained an important driver for achieving responsiveness to specific needs within Australia's CALD population.

However, contributors felt that much of the impetus of the policy has faded, possibly losing priority amongst a number of subsequent social policy agendas. Commitment, and actual performance, across Australian government agencies was assessed as highly variable. A small number of agencies were seen to be performing relatively well in implementing Access and Equity and to have strong infrastructure to support this; others were seen to be performing weakly or to be uninterested. This variable commitment flows through to bodies delivering services on behalf of the Australian Government.

Poor agency communication with CALD communities and clients was frequently cited as a central feature in lack of agency responsiveness. Contributors complained of lack of effective engagement strategies, poor or ineffective approaches to use of languages other than English in websites and written material, and also insufficient use of interpreters.

The problems underlying this variable performance were seen as flowing from the lack of clarity of policy and its application, lack of clarity of what agencies are required to do, weak whole-of-government guidelines supporting Access and Equity action and lack of commitment arising from insufficient governance and accountability arrangements.

The solutions put forward centred on reinvigoration of Access and Equity through clarity of policy, strengthened implementation arrangements, clear performance indicators for agencies and strengthened governance and accountability, including independent audits of performance.

The Panel agrees with contributors that Access and Equity needs to be rejuvenated and strengthened and proposes improvements to the policy itself, its implementation and accompanying governance and accountability arrangements.

The Panel considers it essential that the Australian Government engage effectively with, and be responsive to, cultural and linguistic diversity both in the national interest and in the interests of the communities and individuals concerned. Delivering on Access and Equity policy shows

that the Australian Government respects the diversity of its citizenry, as contemplated by the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*, and meets its duties under international conventions to eliminate racism and promote understanding among races. Moreover, as a country pursuing an active immigration policy now and into the future, there is a strong national interest in ensuring full social and economic participation of migrants through a responsive national administration.

**Policy** In terms of policy, the Panel considers that the Australian Government should reaffirm its commitment to Access and Equity as the primary vehicle for ensuring responsiveness. At the same time, greater clarity is needed for Australian government agencies. It needs to be made clear that the focus of the policy is Australia's CALD communities. The policy should be re-named 'Multicultural Access and Equity Policy' to reinforce this. The policy also needs to be recast in the form of a clear set of 'obligations' which agencies are required to implement. The activities covered should be all interactions with Australia's CALD communities and not just service delivery.

**Implementation** A more structured approach to implementation is required across the Australian Government to ensure that the intended benefits of Access and Equity policy are fully delivered.

This is necessary so that agencies have certainty of what is required of them. It is also necessary to deal with issues identified in submissions relating to poor collection of data by agencies on the CALD clients with whom they interact, poor engagement and communication by agencies and lack of cultural competency skills amongst their staff. In some cases, this involves renewal of whole-of-government guidelines to ensure these issues are included in the standards to be observed by all agencies.

The Panel proposes that the Australian Government adopt a set of core minimum obligations for its agencies in relation to Access and Equity.

Each agency should be required to prepare a biennial Agency Multicultural Plan with a number of key elements such as assigning a clear senior point of responsibility within the agency for Access and Equity; provision for collection of ethnicity data; an engagement strategy to understand CALD clients' interaction with the agency; provision for responsiveness of policy, program design and service delivery; a language and communication plan for CALD communities; a set of key performance indicators relating to engagement with, and outcome of services to, CALD clients; provision for incorporation of Access and Equity requirements in funding agreements with service deliverers; cultural competency training for staff and appropriate feedback mechanisms for CALD clients on agency performance.

For the sake of transparency, agencies should publish these plans on their websites and report actual performance against key performance indicators in annual reports.

For those agencies that already have a strong infrastructure for implementation of Access and Equity, compliance with a more structured approach should be relatively straightforward; others will require the support of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to provide materials that outline best practice in these areas.

Some whole-of-government guidelines and practices will need to be updated to better reflect Access and Equity needs in the current administrative environment: standards and guidelines on data collection reflecting cultural and linguistic diversity, content of funding partnerships and agreements with states and territories and contractual arrangements for outsourced service delivery.

The Panel considers that particularly close attention is needed in the area of communication with CALD communities and clients. It proposes development of a whole-of-government policy on communication and delivery of its services in languages other than English; incorporation of Access and Equity considerations into whole-of-government communication and advertising guidelines; and upgraded whole-of-government guidelines incorporating Access and Equity considerations into the use of the Internet as a communication tool by agencies.

The Panel also supports the upgrading of cultural competency skills on the part of Australian government staff through the development and delivery of training packages for that purpose.

**Governance and accountability** Upgraded governance and accountability arrangements are needed to support the new arrangements and ensure their effectiveness.

The Australian Government has decided that the Australian Multicultural Council should have a role in monitoring Access and Equity performance of government agencies. The Panel proposes that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship retain responsibility for coordination of Access and Equity policy and overseeing its implementation, subject to review and oversight by the Australian Multicultural Council. The Council should have the opportunity to comment on both Agency Multicultural Plans at the time of their preparation and subsequent performance reports.

To achieve better engagement with CALD communities and clients, agencies should also review the accessibility of their complaints mechanisms to ensure they are effective for this group.

To ensure completely independent and thorough scrutiny of performance, the Australian Government should request the Auditor-General to undertake periodic performance audits of selected agencies' performance in meeting their Access and Equity obligations.

Access and Equity performance reporting should be put before the Australian Cabinet at the same time as biennial reporting flowing from Social Inclusion policy so that performance of the policy can be considered by government in a strategic context.

## Alignment with other social policies

Access and Equity must operate, in the context of, and in concert with, social policies adopted by governments from time to time to deal with the needs of specific groups in the community or specific social issues.

The Panel considered the relationship with the Australian Government's Social Inclusion Agenda and National Disability Strategy. Contributors noted that these policies, while potentially very beneficial for CALD clients, could be seen to lose effectiveness in the implementation phase, because the particular needs of this client group were not sufficiently incorporated into policy and program design. The Panel considers it important that Access and Equity considerations and implementation strategies be incorporated into all Australian government 'whole of community' or issue-specific social policy initiatives in order to build effective linkages and ensure that the circumstances of CALD clients are specifically addressed.

## Recommendations

The Panel has made 20 recommendations aimed at rejuvenating the Access and Equity policy, implementation and practices. The Panel's terms of reference require prioritisation of recommendations. The Panel considers that its 20 recommendations form an integrated whole, collective implementation of which is necessary in order to achieve a fully effective Access and Equity policy. Within the 20 recommendations, recommendations 1 to 4 and 6 to 14 are of core importance.

## List of recommendations

### The Panel recommends:

#### Policy

1. That the Australian Government reaffirm its commitment to Access and Equity policy as the primary vehicle for ensuring responsiveness of the Australian Government to Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) population.
2. That Access and Equity policy encompass not only responsiveness in service delivery, but require all Australian government agencies, whether or not performing service delivery activities, when they engage and communicate with the broader community, to also ensure that they include effective communication and engagement with Australia's CALD population.
3. That the key focus of Access and Equity policy be made more transparent by renaming it Multicultural Access and Equity Policy and by the introduction of an explanatory 'byline' which highlights some key elements of the policy—'Respecting Diversity. Improving Responsiveness'.
4. That the existing Access and Equity Strategy and Framework be updated and recast in the form of a set of firm commitments and implementation obligations on the part of agencies to Australia's CALD population (covering engagement, communication, policy, program design and service delivery) as set out at Attachment 5.
5. That Access and Equity policy considerations be incorporated into all Australian government social policy initiatives, such as the Social Inclusion Agenda, Disability Strategy and policy on homelessness.

#### Implementation

6. That the Australian Government disseminate updated Access and Equity policy and associated obligations to all of its agencies, together with a toolkit of resources and better practice guidelines prepared by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.
7. That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship work closely with the Australian Bureau of Statistics in dissemination and practical implementation of updated *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity* being developed by the Bureau.
8. That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into funding partnerships and agreements with states and territories and into whole-of-government guidelines on tender specifications and contractual arrangements for outsourced service delivery by its agencies.

9. That the Australian Government develop a whole-of-government policy on communication by its agencies in languages other than English, including use of interpreters and translators.
10. That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into its whole-of-government communication and advertising guidelines.
11. That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into upgraded whole-of-government guidelines on the use of the Internet as a communication and service delivery tool by its agencies.
12. That the Australian Government assess or develop training packages on Access and Equity policy and cultural competency and incorporate them into Australian Public Service Commission sponsored courses and individual agency training on leadership, policy development and service delivery.

### Governance and accountability

13. That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship retain responsibility for coordination of Access and Equity policy, monitoring of implementation and consolidated performance reporting across all Australian government agencies, subject to review and oversight by the Australian Multicultural Council.
14. That the Australian Government request the Auditor-General to undertake periodic performance audits of selected groups of agencies' performance in meeting their obligations under Access and Equity policy.
15. That Australian government agencies review the accessibility of their complaints mechanisms to CALD communities and adjust them as necessary, in consultation with CALD communities.
16. That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship continue to commission the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia to provide structured feedback from CALD communities on their perceptions of agencies' Access and Equity performance within the new arrangements.
17. That Access and Equity reporting prepared by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Australian Multicultural Council, together with any available reports by the Auditor-General, be considered by the Cabinet at the same time as biennial reporting flowing from Social Inclusion policy.
18. That the Australian Government explore, in conjunction with states and territories, the use of the Report on Government Services (RoGS) process to gain a better understanding of Access and Equity performance in relation to CALD clients.
19. That the Australian Government consider adequacy of current provision for research, including national research priorities, on the practical outcomes of the migration program. This





assessment should particularly include research on interactions between the Australian Government and Access and Equity target groups and interactions with temporary entrants.

#### Other issues

20. That the Australian Government ensure that agencies give clear and coordinated, whole-of-government advice to long-term temporary entrants to Australia, particularly New Zealand citizens contemplating long-term temporary residence in Australia, both before and after arrival, on their entitlements.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a black blazer and a headset with a microphone, is seated at a desk in a modern office. She is looking towards the right side of the frame. The desk has a keyboard and a mouse. Large windows in the background show a view of a city with greenery. The text "Chapter 1: Setting the context" is overlaid on the image in a white box.

## Chapter 1: Setting the context



## 1.1 Access and Equity Inquiry 2011–12

This Inquiry flows from the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council report, *The People of Australia*, presented to the Australian Government in 2010. The Advisory Council's report provided the basis for Australia's Multicultural Policy which was announced by the Australian Government in 2011.

In addition to noting the multicultural character of Australia and the need to present it as an important part of the national identity, the Advisory Council called for government services to be accessible and equitable for all. It stated:

All Australians in need of assistance from government and qualified for it are equally entitled to receive it. Culture, language and religion should in no way compromise this right.<sup>1</sup>

The report acknowledged the important role Access and Equity policy has in ensuring that government programs and services are accessible 'to all Australians who require them', including people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.<sup>2</sup> The Advisory Council stated:

It is the duty of government to see that all citizens are able to participate in programs and receive the services to which they are entitled, regardless of their cultural background. Where programs and services are not being used by Australians because of cultural or language difficulties, such programs need to be delivered by organisations culturally and linguistically able to do so. That is not a matter of providing an advantage not available to all Australians, but rather ensuring that all Australians are treated equally.<sup>3</sup>

In its recommendations, the Advisory Council called for an independent body to:

monitor the responsiveness of Australian government services to clients disadvantaged by cultural or linguistic barriers, including the implementation of rolling audits in crucial policy areas [and for the government to] establish protocols to consider migrant and cultural needs prior to the implementation of relevant policy and programs.<sup>4</sup>

1 Australian Multicultural Advisory Council, *The People of Australia: The Australian Multicultural Advisory Council's statement on cultural diversity and recommendations to government*, April 2010, p. 18.

2 *ibid*

3 *ibid*

4 *ibid*

Supporting the Advisory Council's recommendation, the Government established an ongoing Australian Multicultural Council in 2011 and included in its functions monitoring and reporting on Access and Equity from 2012 onwards.<sup>5</sup>

As part of this initiative to strengthen Access and Equity, in November 2011 the then Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Senator the Hon Kate Lundy, announced an Inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian government services to clients disadvantaged by cultural and linguistic barriers.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.2 Terms of reference

The terms of reference for the Inquiry are to:

1. inquire into the Australian Government's current approach to Access and Equity and its implementation; and
2. provide prioritised recommendations to the government for improving the responsiveness of Australian government services to a culturally and linguistically diverse population.

The Inquiry's focus is on Australians from CALD backgrounds. Access and Equity policy currently focuses specifically on redressing those systemic inequalities that impact on Australia's CALD population. The terms of reference make clear that the Panel's advice should be in relation to improving responsiveness for this group.

In view of submissions by, and advocating on behalf of, some groups of temporary residents in Australia in relation to their entitlements while living in Australia, the Panel sought advice on whether this issue was within scope. The Panel received advice from Senator Lundy which indicated that temporary residents fell within the scope of the Inquiry in the context of increasing awareness of existing entitlements attached to temporary residence visas, but that advocating for additional entitlements or financial support was not within the scope of the Inquiry.

## 1.3 Understanding Access and Equity policy

Access and Equity policy has been built upon the core principle that Australian Government services should be accessible to all Australians who are eligible for them, responsive to their needs, and deliver equitable outcomes for them.

While this principle is applicable to all Australians, including those from CALD backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and people with disabilities, Access and Equity policy focuses on the systemic inequalities that impact on Australia's CALD population.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Government, *Response to the Recommendations of the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council in The People of Australia*, 16 February 2011, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Senator Kate Lundy, Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, *New panel to conduct Access and Equity inquiry*, Media release, 18 November 2011.



Access and Equity means that government departments should respond to and cater for the diversity of clients' needs, fully respecting their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. *Access* means that Australian government services and programs should be available for CALD clients and accessible by them. *Equity* means that these services and programs deliver outcomes for CALD Australians that are on a par with those other Australians can expect to receive.

Access and Equity is primarily about existing Australian government programs and services adapting to the needs of all Australians, rather than providing special and separate services to clients from CALD backgrounds. It requires that cultural diversity principles be incorporated into policy and program design, and into the implementation of program and service delivery.

Access and Equity applies to all Australian Government-funded programs and services, irrespective of whether they are delivered directly by Australian government departments, state and territory governments through Australian Government funding, community organisations or commercial enterprises.

## 1.4 History of Access and Equity policy

Access and Equity policy, at the Australian Government level, can be considered to have evolved through a number of stages.<sup>7</sup>

The impetus for an Access and Equity policy originated with the 1978 Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants (The Galbally Report<sup>8</sup>). The review was established to examine the changing needs of migrants and to make sure that these were being effectively met. 1978 to 1985 marked a period of growing awareness that migrants have particular circumstances that require responses and services not catered for by mainstream agencies. Coordinated efforts to meet the complexities of these needs included the establishment of ethno-specific services to supplement mainstream services. In July 1982, an evaluation was undertaken by the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) of the programs and services resulting from the acceptance of the Galbally Report.<sup>9</sup> This evaluation reiterated the need for migrants to have equal access to general programs and services.

The second stage, from 1985 to 1996, covered the establishment of the Access and Equity Strategy and a period of concerted efforts to sensitise government service providers to the needs of a diverse population. In 1989 the Access and Equity Strategy was expanded to include all residents of Australia facing barriers relating to their language, culture, religion and race, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and children of parents from non-English speaking backgrounds. In 1994, the Access and Equity Strategy was further extended to include Australian South Sea Islanders.

In 1991–92, the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet conducted an extensive cross-portfolio evaluation of the Access and Equity Strategy. One of the 43 recommendations<sup>10</sup> arising from the evaluation was that an annual report on Australian government departments and agencies' Access and Equity performance be tabled in parliament before the end of each financial year.

The *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* was launched in 1998 for guiding Access and Equity implementation and reporting by Australian governments. It was consistent with the public sector focus at that time on ensuring government services met the needs of all clients. It was endorsed by all spheres of government, representing a nationally consistent approach to the delivery of government services.

<sup>7</sup> The 1997 Annual Report first presented the view that Access and Equity policy developed in discernible stages. Commonwealth of Australia, *Responding to Diversity: Progress in Implementing the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*, Access and Equity Annual Report 1997, AGPS, Canberra, 1997, p. 64–65.

<sup>8</sup> The full title is: *Migrant Services and Programs: Report of the Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants*.

<sup>9</sup> Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, *Evaluation of Post-Arrival Programs and Services*, AIMA, Melbourne, 1982.

<sup>10</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Access and Equity Evaluation Report*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992, paragraph 30.

The Charter integrated a set of seven service delivery principles concerning cultural diversity (access, equity, communication, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability) into the strategic planning and policy development, budget and reporting processes of government service delivery, including services which were provided directly by government agencies and those provided through community organisations and commercial enterprises.

The Charter's Performance Management Framework provided agencies with a specific tool for reporting on performance and monitoring progress in implementation of the Charter. The framework was built around five key roles of government: Policy Adviser, Regulator, Purchaser, Provider and Employer. Eleven performance indicators across these roles captured their intersection with the seven Charter principles.

A decade later in 2005, an evaluation of programs and the multicultural policy, *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity*, conducted by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), noted the need for the Access and Equity Strategy to be revitalised. A new framework, *Accessible Government Services for All* (AGSFA), was developed to replace and simplify the Charter.

A list of key events in the history of the Australian Government's Access and Equity policy is at Attachment 1.

## Indigenous Australians

In 1989, the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia...Sharing our Future*, announced that the Australian Government would strengthen its Access and Equity Strategy to encompass 'all those who may face barriers of race, culture or language including Aboriginal people and Australian-born children of non-English speaking background'.<sup>11</sup>

However, reporting by departments on the policy's application to Indigenous Australians ceased with the 2006–08 Report. This change corresponded with Machinery of Government changes that took place on 27 January 2006, and which reflected the change in government policy that Indigenous Australians' distinct needs should be afforded separate consideration from those of migrant-origin CALD communities. As part of this change, portfolio responsibility for Indigenous Affairs was transferred from the then DIMIA to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and DIMIA became the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA).

<sup>11</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia...Sharing our Future*, 1989, p. 23.

## 1.5 Access and Equity in other jurisdictions

The principles and practice of Access and Equity have also applied for many years in other spheres of government around Australia in their interactions with Australia's CALD communities.

Access and Equity considerations form part of the multicultural policies of states and territories, although policy terminology may be different. In some cases multicultural and associated access policies are legislatively based; in other cases they are policy based. Relevant state and territory legislation and policies are summarised at Attachment 2.

Similarly, local governments in Australia, particularly in those local government areas that have a high density CALD population, have a wide range of programs and practices to ensure an inclusive approach in their interactions with CALD communities.

In relation to overseas experience, a number of countries with CALD populations have policies which aim to achieve similar objectives to Australia's Access and Equity policy although the policy frameworks and terminology are different. For example, Canada, through the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1988), aims to ensure that the Canadian Government is sensitive and responsive to Canada's multicultural reality. Under this legislation, the Canadian Government reports annually on issues such as statistical data to develop policies, programs and practices that are sensitive and respond to the diversity of Canada. In the United Kingdom, agencies have a responsibility to promote equality of services (Equality Duty) and compliance is assessed through the Equality and Human Rights Commission. In Norway, An Action Plan for the Integration and Social Inclusion of the Immigrant Population and Goals for Social Inclusion (2007) requires that every person shall have access to public services and institutions and that public services be adapted to ensure equal services and opportunities for all.



## 1.6 Current governance and accountability arrangements

Access and Equity is an Australian Government endorsed policy (without direct legislative backing) that agencies across the Australian Government are required to implement.

The policy is an integral part of Australia's Multicultural Policy. Principle 2 (of four principles of Multicultural Policy) declares that:

The Australian government is committed to a just, inclusive and socially cohesive society where everyone can participate in the opportunities that Australia offers and where government services are responsive to the needs of Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Portfolio Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries in the Immigration and Citizenship portfolio have had responsibility for overseeing the policy since 1996, supported by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in its various forms.

### Current Access and Equity policy

The Access and Equity Strategy and Framework sets out the current whole-of-government approach to Access and Equity.

The Access and Equity Strategy was the name first given to Access and Equity policy. The Strategy aims to improve service delivery to CALD communities and clients, requiring that Australian government departments meet their needs through mainstream programs and services, including through strategic planning, policy development, budget and reporting processes of government service delivery.

The supporting Access and Equity Framework (Attachment 4) has four principles, each with three associated strategies, which were developed to help departments address key areas of responsibility for government. The principles are:

- Responsiveness—government programs and services should be accessible, fair and responsive to the needs of their clients
- Communication—communication with clients should be open, effective and use appropriate channels
- Accountability—reporting and review mechanisms should be accessible, transparent and effective
- Leadership—government departments should work together, emphasise responsibilities to partners, and encourage participation in our society by all.

In terms of accountability, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has collated regular reports on Access and Equity performance across Australian government agencies since 1996. The reports have been tabled in both houses of Parliament. In recent years the department has chosen to survey departments every year on best practice examples of Access and Equity performance, and publish a biennial report.

The last report was published in 2011. It features examples of how government departments and agencies are responding to the needs of Australia's multicultural society. The report also contains contributions by state and territory governments and local governments, through the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), and a brief overview of a Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) report on community consultations.

## 1.7 The Panel's approach to the Inquiry

The Panel conducted a multiple channel consultation process as part of the Inquiry.

The purpose was to gain an appreciation of how stakeholders currently understand Access and Equity, how responsive Australian government agencies are in practice and how responsiveness could be improved. The Panel also wished to ensure that all affected stakeholders, communities and individuals had an opportunity to have their say. The key stakeholders included state and territory government multicultural agencies; Australian government departments and agencies; peak bodies and advocacy groups (representing CALD communities) and the culturally and linguistically diverse public.<sup>12</sup>

The three consultative channels used were:

1. a broad public call for submissions (including advertising in key community languages), supplemented by targeted requests for input from specific organisations
3. face-to-face consultations in selected locations
4. face-to-face meetings with senior government officials from key Australian government agencies.

Findings from submissions and face-to-face meetings are incorporated in the discussion in Chapter 3.

<sup>12</sup> The Panel invited the following organisations to submit to the Inquiry: Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), Ombudsman, Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council (RRAC), Australian Red Cross (ARC), National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA), Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA), Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), Australia's older persons' organisation (COTA), National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) and Australian Council for Social Service (ACOSS).

## Public call for submissions

To enable people from CALD backgrounds to participate in the consultation process, the Panel advertised the call for submissions in nine national and metropolitan English-language newspapers and 29 ethnic newspapers in December 2011–February 2012.

The Panel released two documents to facilitate discussion. The longer Discussion Paper primarily targeted government agencies and the community sector; and a shorter paper, Questions for Communities and Clients, which was available in 27 languages, focused on client experience.<sup>13</sup> The papers were supplemented by response templates. All documents were made available in hard copy upon request and for download from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's website, [www.immi.gov.au/accessandequityinquiry](http://www.immi.gov.au/accessandequityinquiry).

Languages were selected based on a combination of data: the 2011 Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) language demand data (i.e. the number of requests to TIS for telephone and onsite translation); 2006 Census data on speakers of other languages who stated they had low English language proficiency; and information on languages into which recent Access and Equity reports and advertisements for the Australian Multicultural Council have been translated.

The Inquiry received 136 submissions in total from a range of stakeholders. The following table indicates the number of submissions in each of the three categories:

Type of document	Number of submissions received
Discussion paper	68
Client and communities paper	44
Other / free form submissions	24

A full list of those organisations and individuals who made submissions is at Attachment 3.

## Face-to-face consultations

The Inquiry held four face-to-face consultations in selected locations in Australia. The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) administered and conducted these consultations on behalf the Panel to determine the particular Access and Equity issues faced by urban and regional areas. The consultations were held in partnership with the Ethnic Communities' Council of Newcastle and the Hunter Region; the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory; Logan City Council; and Regional Development Australia. Invitations were sent out through FECCA's national network and invitees were encouraged to bring along others, particularly community members, and forward the invitation on to interested parties.

<sup>13</sup> Consultation documents were translated into the following languages (in alphabetical order): Assyrian, Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, Dari, Dinka, Farsi, Greek, Hazaragi, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Karen, Khmer, Kirundi, Korean, Nepali, Punjabi, Russian, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Thai, Turkish and Vietnamese.

The consultations were held in the following locations:

Location	Date	Number of attendees
Logan, Queensland	17 February 2012	30
Melbourne, Victoria	1 March 2012	18
Newcastle, New South Wales	15 March 2012	8
Darwin, Northern Territory	29 March 2012	21

Consultations were attended by a variety of representatives from the local CALD community, service providers and government departments. Whilst consultations targeted non-government service providers, the involvement of community members and government departments at some consultations enabled invaluable feedback.

### Meetings with key government service delivery agencies

Senior officials from key Australian government agencies were invited to address the Panel to discuss how they meet their Access and Equity responsibilities. The Panel met with:

Department	Date
Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)	30 January 2012
Attorney-General's Department (AGD)	27 February 2012
Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD)	27 February 2012
Australian Tax Office (ATO)	19 March 2012
Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA)	19 March 2012
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)	30 April 2012
Department of Human Services (Centrelink, Child Support and Medicare)	30 April 2012
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)	14 May 2012

The discussions with senior officials helped the Inquiry understand the variety of approaches to Access and Equity in government agencies.



## 1.8 Structure of this report

The following chapter describes Australia's cultural diversity now and into the future. Chapter 3 assesses current responsiveness of Australian government agencies and how to improve it. Chapter 4 discusses the alignment of Access and Equity policy with other critical social policies.





## Chapter 2: Diverse Australia now and into the future



## 2.1 Introduction

Contemporary Australia is a diverse nation, built on migration and Indigenous cultures.

Australians can take pride in being part of a nation which confidently incorporates such diversity into our national attitude and identity. The social and economic benefits of migration are experienced every day. Diversity enriches Australia by increasing our understanding of other cultures and broadening our connection with the region and wider world. As a consequence, our multicultural character gives Australia a competitive edge in an increasingly globalised world.

Migration is essential to sustain the growth of Australia's workforce and meet the challenges of an ageing population. It adds to the number of people in the population of working age, increases the proportion of those people who are in work, and boosts productivity, thus raising the living standards of all Australians. Migrants to Australia have the lowest unemployment rate among all countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), equal to the national average of five per cent. They thereby contribute strongly to the economy and to the Australian Government budget.

Current and likely future trends for source countries of migration to Australia indicate that cultural and linguistic diversity will not only continue, but also become increasingly complex as people from an even greater diversity of cultures meet our future immigration needs.

This chapter provides a snapshot of Australia's CALD population, flags some key migration trends into the future and identifies some key characteristics of the Access and Equity target groups within that population.

## 2.2 Australia today

Since 1945 Australia has successfully settled seven million people. According to the 2011 Census data, Australia's resident population was 21.5 million people. Of this population, 5.3 million were born overseas.

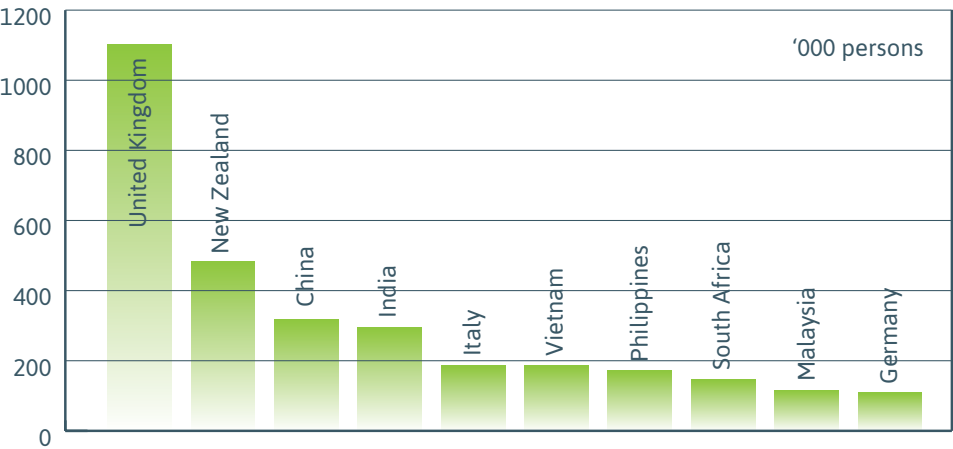
At the 2011 Census, around 47 per cent of all Australians were either born overseas or had at least one overseas-born parent.

### How we became diverse

The diversity we see today in the make-up of Australia's population flows from the well-documented accelerating diversification of nationalities, ancestries, cultures and languages of migrants coming to Australia over nearly 70 years of a planned migration program.

Following the Second World War, immigration sources moved quickly beyond migration from the United Kingdom to encompass continental European countries, such as Italy and Greece and Yugoslavia. Large numbers of migrants arrived from Lebanon and Vietnam during the 1970s and 1980s and Latin America featured as a

Graph 1: Top 10 birthplaces of Australia’s overseas born population



Source: ABS, 2011 Census Community Profiles.

new source of migration. Migration from China and India increased in the 1990s. In recent years, new sources of migrants have included parts of Africa and the Middle East.

In less than a lifetime, Australia has changed from a primarily Anglo-Celtic society of fewer than eight million to a multicultural society of 21.5 million. Graph 1 sets out the top ten countries of birth of Australia’s overseas born population as at the 2011 Census.

Graph 1 shows that eight of the 10 countries have introduced into Australia people of significantly different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In some cases, migrants from the United Kingdom and New Zealand, countries with populations usually regarded as culturally and linguistically similar to Australia’s, may also add to Australia’s diversity as a proportion of them will be migrants to those countries from dissimilar backgrounds who are migrating for a second time.

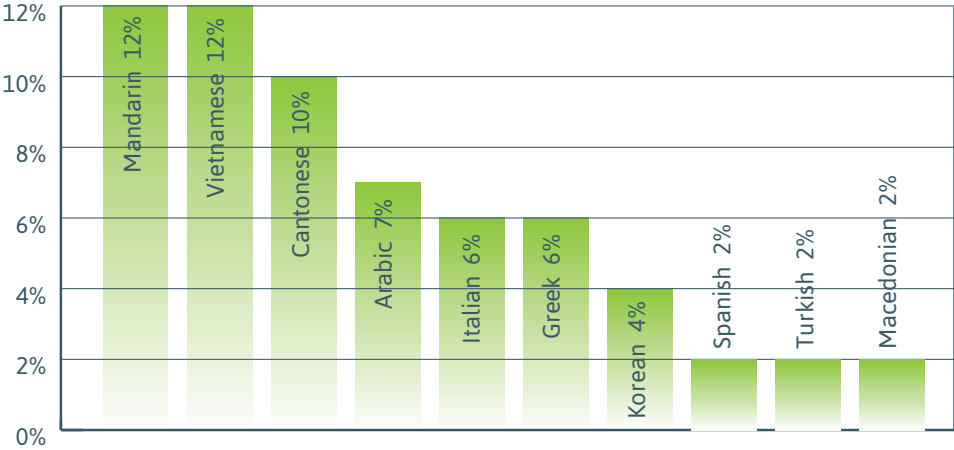
Language diversity

Diversity of migration sources brings diversity of language skills.

Over 260 languages are spoken in Australia today as a result of migration, including Indigenous languages. Linguistic diversity adds to Australia’s competitiveness in international trade and business through the expansion and promotion of foreign-language competence within Australia. Such diversity assists Australian business in its ability to gain knowledge of overseas markets, grow its expertise in cultural protocols in business partner countries and also to develop overseas contacts. These skills are increasingly important with continued growth of trade with partners such as China and India.

In terms of new entrants to the country, a significant proportion of people coming to Australia under current migration rules do have strong English language skills—they are either native English speakers or have been tested for English-language skills in order to qualify for migration or have lived for a considerable period in Australia before obtaining permanent residence.

**Graph 2: Top 10 languages spoken at home for people who did not speak English well or at all**



Source: ABS, 2011 Census Community Profiles.

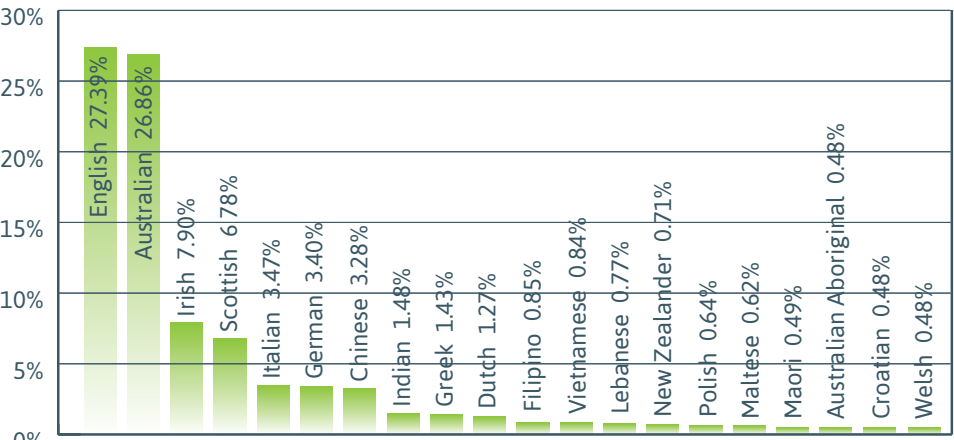
On the other hand, there are some migrants who have little or no English-language skills having qualified for entry to Australia in categories of migration where English language proficiency is not a requirement—such as immediate family members of skilled migrants, spouses of Australians, parents of Australians or as refugee or humanitarian entrants. While many of these people obtain English-language skills through a variety of programs such as the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), there may be a long transition period for some and others may never do so. There are also those migrants who have been here for many years who never had the opportunity to participate in such programs or whose English-language skills have regressed with ageing.

In the 2011 Census, 19 per cent of the total population spoke a language other than English at home. Of these, 83 per cent stated they spoke English well or very well, while 17 per cent stated that they could not speak English well or at all.

Graph 2 illustrates the top 10 languages spoken at home for those people who did not speak English well, or at all, as at the 2011 Census.



Graph 3: Top 20 ancestries of Australia's population



Source: ABS, 2011 Census Community Profiles.

### Diversity of heritage

In conjunction with country of birth data, ancestry is one key measure of cultural diversity and ethnic origin. Today, Australians identify with 300 ancestries, the top 20 of which are set out in Graph 3 above.

At the 2011 Census, 20 per cent of the Australian population were second generation Australians, that is, Australian-born with one or both of their parents born overseas.<sup>14</sup> The median age of all second generation Australians was 28 years. This compared with median age of 46 years for first generation Australians.<sup>15</sup>

Fifty-three per cent of first generation Australians spoke a language other than English at home, reducing to 20 per cent of second generation Australians and to two per cent of third or later generation Australians.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.3 Diversity into the future

Australia continues to have active permanent and temporary migration programs, at or near record levels, and these are likely to continue into the future to meet foreseeable economic and social objectives. These programs add to Australia's diversity.

#### Permanent migration

Australia's permanent immigration program has two components: the Migration Program—largely comprising the skilled and family streams—and the Humanitarian Program, for refugees and others in humanitarian need.

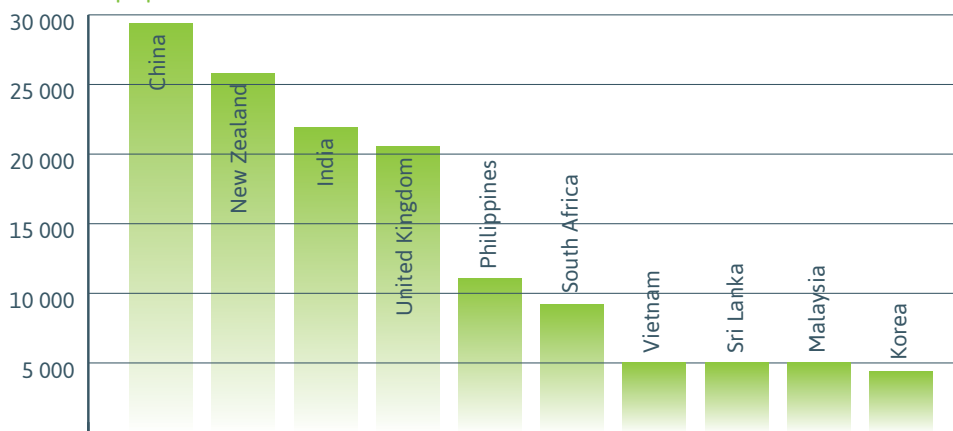
The 2012–13 migration program is set at 190 000 places, with 68 per cent allocated to skilled stream migrants and 32 per cent to family stream migrants. The Humanitarian Program for the same period is set at 13 750 visas.

<sup>14</sup> For 2011 figures, see: ABS, *Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census 2012–2013*, 2071.0.

<sup>15</sup> ABS, *Second Generation Australians, A Picture of the Nation*, 2070.0, 2006, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, p. 49. For 2011 figures, see: ABS, *Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census 2012–2013*, 2071.0.

Graph 4: Top 10 source countries of permanent additions to Australia's population in 2010–2011



Source: DIAC, *Immigration Update 2010–11*

Graph 4 illustrates current and likely future trends of diversity.

Compared to the top 10 countries of birth of overseas-born persons present in Australia as set out in Graph 1, which ranks the United Kingdom first and China and India third and fourth respectively, Graph 4 shows that in terms of recent migration, China is ranked first, India third and the United Kingdom fourth. The Philippines, which ranks seventh in terms of overseas-born population, ranks fifth in recent migration.

The way Australia's population is ageing is another indicator of the shift in migration patterns. In 2011, the median age of Australia's population which was born in European countries was 56 years, compared to a median age of 37 years for people born in Asian countries. Among the top 10 countries of birth, people born in Italy were the oldest (with half of this group aged 67.5 years or over), and people born in India were the youngest (with half aged 30 or younger).<sup>17</sup>

## Temporary migration

As the global movement of people accelerates, more people are taking the opportunity to live and work in other countries on a long-term temporary basis. Australia has experienced growth in inflows and outflows, with over one million Australians living abroad.

The continuing growth in inflows of temporary entrants to Australia also adds to our pool of diversity.

Although they do not have access to the same entitlements as permanent residents and Australian citizens, temporary residents do form a very significant culturally and linguistically diverse population with whom Australian government agencies may need to interact and apply Access and Equity principles.

These groups are principally overseas students, working holidaymakers, and temporary skilled workers.

<sup>17</sup> ABS, *Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census 2012–2013*, 2071.0.

At 31 December 2011, there were some 254,680 overseas students in Australia, 134,840 working holidaymakers and 128,600 temporary skilled workers.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of diversity, the top 10 source countries of overseas students in Australia at 31 December 2011 were all culturally and linguistically diverse (China, India, Korea, Vietnam, Nepal, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Brazil); six of the top 10 source countries of working holidaymakers were culturally diverse (United Kingdom, Korea, Germany, Ireland, Taiwan, France, Japan, Italy, Canada and the United States); and five of the top 10 source countries of temporary skilled workers were culturally diverse (United Kingdom, India, Philippines, Ireland, United States, South Africa, China, Canada, Germany and Japan).

### New Zealand citizen temporary residents

There are also some 598 000 New Zealand citizen temporary residents living in Australia under special arrangements introduced for New Zealand citizens in 2001.

## 2.4 Target groups for Access and Equity

Many migrants to Australia, past and present, from CALD backgrounds, have the skills to interact with Australian government agencies and their services within the standard approaches that those agencies apply in interacting with the broader community.

Within this broad movement of people into the Australian community, there are some migrants who need a greater level of responsiveness to their particular circumstances. These people, who are the target groups for Access and Equity policy, are:

- migrants with low levels of English proficiency
- refugees and humanitarian entrants
- visibly different migrants
- newly arrived communities and individuals with low levels of knowledge of the Australian system, and
- other migrants experiencing difficulties in accessing services based on age, gender, disability, youth or coming from collectivist cultures.

Some of these characteristics may overlap in the case of some communities and individuals.

The following illustrate how these characteristics may mean no effective access to, or outcomes from, interactions with Australian government agencies that are not equipped to deal with cultural and linguistic diversity according to Access and Equity principles.

---

<sup>18</sup> DIAC, *Temporary entrants and New Zealand residents in Australia as at 31 December 2011*, p. 3–4.

### **Migrants with low levels of English language proficiency**

Government services are often delivered in complex administrative jargon which can be confusing to native English speakers. For people with little or no English language capability it can be extremely difficult and daunting to deal with government agencies.

These barriers to access can become insurmountable when combined with government agencies' extensive replacement of face-to-face services with technology through the use of call centres and the Internet, which do not enable the same level of interactivity and problem-solving.

**Refugees and humanitarian entrants** Refugees and humanitarian entrants come from a wide variety of backgrounds and circumstances. It is likely that in addition to other characteristics of the Access and Equity target group which they may share with other migrants, they will additionally come from a heavily disrupted personal existence (encompassing education, employment, and family life), reflecting either flight from the country of persecution, tenuous temporary stay in a country of first asylum or possibly a period of many years institutionalisation in a camp environment under the auspices of The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They may also have suffered from trauma arising from their previous circumstances. These circumstances can severely hamper effective interaction with government.

**Visibly different migrants** Diversity of immigration intake has increasingly brought visibly different communities to Australia who may be subject to real or perceived racism and discrimination in their dealings with government and therefore may be tentative and reluctant to engage with the Australian Government and its service providers. This reluctance will be compounded if experience of the migrant is that they are stereotyped by the service provider.<sup>19</sup>

**Newly arrived communities and individuals with low levels of knowledge of the Australian system** Some newly arrived migrant communities may experience difficulty in interacting with the Australian Government arising both from cultural differences in the societies from which they come and also complete unfamiliarity with the Australian system of government and administration.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See also research by Dr Millsom Henry-Waring, 'Can one belong when you stand out? The Social Significance of Identity, Belonging & Community'. Some Preliminary Research Findings. Presentation at 'A Long Way from Home: Rural and Regional Resettlement Experiences of Visible Migrants and Refugees' conference, University of Melbourne, 10 February 2012, [www.ssps.unimelb.edu.au/\\_\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/538290/waring-can-one-belong.pdf](http://www.ssps.unimelb.edu.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0009/538290/waring-can-one-belong.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> See also research by K. Lewig, F. Arney and M. Salveron, *The Working with Refugee Families Project*, Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia, 2009.

Cultural differences may include norms that prohibit seeking support outside the family (especially women and children), traditional gender roles that may make men reluctant to engage with certain services, fear of authorities based on country of origin experience and attitudes to health, including mental health.<sup>21</sup>

A related barrier for those newcomers not familiar with the Australian Government and its services is that Australian government agencies very often assume English proficiency and 'system' knowledge, including the ability to cope with heavy paperwork and complex internet access requirements.

**Other migrants experiencing difficulties in accessing services based on age, gender, disability, youth or coming from collectivist cultures** The kind of barriers and difficulties that may be experienced by the foregoing groups may also become pronounced in particular types of interactions with Australian government services where additional characteristics come in to play, such as old age, gender, disability or youth. Migrants coming from cultures where problem-solving is collective may have particular difficulties in dealing with Australian government services which focus on the individual.<sup>22</sup>

There is significant literature which identifies that women from CALD and refugee backgrounds are at higher risk and vulnerability of experiencing domestic and family violence when residing in developed Western countries. The following factors have been identified:

- cultural difference
- gender roles, and
- familism, shame and collectivism combined with factors related to migration experience, social isolation, low socio-economic status, racism, inadequate access or knowledge of support services.

21 P. Sawrikar and Katz, 'Enhancing family and relationship service accessibility and delivery in culturally and linguistically diverse families in Australia', *Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse (AFRC) Issues*, No. 3, 2008.

22 Further information on gender and youth issues in relation to migration can be found in research by G. Cameron, E. Frydenberg, A. Jackson, 'Young refugees in Australia: Perspectives from policy, practice and research', *Children Australia*, vol. 36:2, 2011, p. 46–55, and Carolyn Poljski, *On her way: Primary prevention of violence against immigrant and refugee women in Australia*, Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, 2011.

Women from CALD backgrounds are generally also less likely than other groups of women to report cases of domestic or family violence. The factors which may influence this include:

- limited availability of appropriate translator/interpreter services
- access to support services
- limited support networks
- reluctance to confide in others
- social isolation
- lack of awareness about the law
- immigration status/visa
- continued abuse from the immediate family, and
- cultural and/or religious shame and religious beliefs about divorce.<sup>23</sup>

The inability for Australian government services and individuals in these profiles to interact is exacerbated if the model of service is not culturally appropriate or if the service is not perceived as relevant to the migrant due to lack of cultural diversity in the agency workforce or the way the service is marketed.

## Research

Findings from the following research sources illustrate some outcomes for migrants that may be influenced by cultural or linguistic barriers: Australian Social Inclusion Board data, the 2006 Census, the 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, the 2011 Australian Survey Research study on the Settlement Outcomes for New Arrivals (SONA), and the 2011 research in relation to refugee settlers undertaken by Professor Graeme Hugo of the University of Adelaide.

<sup>23</sup> S. Rees and B. Pease, 'Refugee Settlement, Safety and Wellbeing: Exploring Domestic and Family Violence in Refugee Communities', Paper 4 of the Violence Against Women Community Attitudes Project, VicHealth, 2006.

## Employment

Data taken from *How Australia is faring* report, published by the Social Inclusion Board in 2010, indicated that the employment rate for people aged 15 to 64 years varied significantly according to their level of English proficiency:

- 36 per cent of people who did not speak English well or at all were employed
- 65 per cent of people who spoke another language but also spoke English very well or well were employed, and
- 73 per cent of people who only spoke English were employed.<sup>24,25</sup>

## Communication

According to the 2006 Census, 53 per cent of people who did not speak English well or at all had an Internet connection at home, compared with 72 per cent of people who stated they spoke English well or very well.<sup>26</sup>

The 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that 36 per cent of people whose first language was not English achieved at least a minimum level of prose literacy, compared with 54 per cent of the general population.<sup>27</sup>

## Age

Data published by the Social Inclusion Board indicated that older age groups were less likely to speak English well or at all:

- 38 per cent of people aged 65 years and over could not speak English well or at all, and
- 7 per cent of people aged 5 to 24 years could not speak English well or at all.<sup>28</sup>

Within the older age group, gender is somewhat significant—noting that gender does not factor into other English language proficiency indicators:

- 43 per cent of females (compared with 32 per cent of males) aged 65 years and over had difficulty with spoken English.
- 7 per cent of males and 7 per cent of females aged 5 to 24 years did not speak English well or at all.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Australian Social Inclusion Board, *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is faring*, 2010, p. 26–28.

<sup>25</sup> Linkages between English language proficiency and employment and the corresponding need for responsive services are well established. For example, see P. Waxman, 'The economic adjustment of recently arrived Bosnian, Afghan and Iraqi refugees in Sydney Australia', *The International Migration Review*, 35:2, p. 472–505.

<sup>26</sup> Australian Social Inclusion Board, *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is faring*, 2010, p. 58. See also ABS, *Patterns of Internet Access in Australia*, 8146.0.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 52. Also see ABS, *Adult literacy and life skills survey*, 4228.0.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 54. Also see ABS, *Census of Population and Housing*, 2068.0 (2006).

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 54. Also see ABS, *Census of Population and Housing*, 2068.0 (2006).

## Refugees and humanitarian entrants

SONA research findings on the experience of humanitarian entrants conclude:

- 'humanitarian entrants are heavily dependent on Centrelink payments' and that 'dependency reduces only slightly over time'<sup>30</sup>
- most humanitarian entrants used an interpreter within the first six months of arrival,<sup>31</sup> and
- humanitarian entrants found it harder to use public support services compared with Family and Skilled visa holders, citing communication problems, including limited spoken English proficiency.<sup>32</sup>

Professor Graeme Hugo found that:

- humanitarian entrants' 'levels of unemployment and participation rates converge toward those of the Australia-born with increased residence in Australia'<sup>33</sup>
- one third of recent humanitarian arrivals are in unskilled jobs, three times the rate of other arrivals; and 'there is concern for some who are trapped in low income jobs in secondary labour market niches'<sup>34</sup> and
- 'humanitarian settlers suffered more in the recent global financial crisis than the Australia-born and other migrants in terms of an increase in unemployment levels'.<sup>35</sup>

Both the SONA and Hugo reports examined the levels of literacy and education.

The SONA report found that 'in total nearly 35 per cent of humanitarian entrants have a technical or university qualification either before or after arrival in Australia—compared to 39 per cent of the Australian population 15 years and older'.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, the Hugo report found 'the proportion of recent refugee arrivals aged between 15 and 24 attending an educational institution is higher than for other migrants and the Australia-born. Humanitarian settlers on average place high store on education for their children'.<sup>37</sup>

The Hugo report also found 'there are some indications that refugee-humanitarian settlers are increasingly settling in regional Australia in areas where development is being impeded by a lack of labour and service provision is threatened by declining resident populations'.<sup>38</sup>

30 Australian Survey Research Group, *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals—Report on Findings Study for Department of Immigration and Citizenship*, 2011, p. 2.

31 *ibid*

32 *ibid*

33 G. Hugo, *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants—Final Report to Department of Immigration and Citizenship*, 2011, p. xxiii.

34 *ibid*

35 *ibid*, p. xxiv

36 Australian Survey Research Group, *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals—Report on Findings Study for Department of Immigration and Citizenship*, 2011, p. 2.

37 G. Hugo, 2011, p. xxiii.

38 *ibid*



### Chapter 3: Current responsiveness of Australian Government agencies and how to improve it



Photo courtesy AMES

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses major issues raised by stakeholders regarding the responsiveness of Australian government agencies and services to people from CALD backgrounds and makes recommendations on how to improve it.

In seeking the views of stakeholders, the Panel invited comment around the concepts of the adequacy of Access and Equity policy, agency performance in practical implementation of the policy, and governance and accountability. This chapter presents a summary of those views and the Panel's findings and recommendations based around those themes.

The Panel notes that accurate measurement of Australian Government Access and Equity performance is problematic given the extensive nature of its programs and activities implemented through 20 departments of state and around 90 agencies covered by the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*. These agencies engage with the community, directly and indirectly, in multiple ways. There is no readily accessible data which allows Access and Equity performance to be measured in detail. Therefore, the views of interested stakeholders and clients who regularly engage with individual agencies can be considered the most accurate guide to the existing level of responsiveness.

### 3.2 Overview

The Panel was impressed with the extent of work and depth of analysis that had gone into the submissions, including the fact that some non-government organisations had surveyed clients in order to provide the Panel with a snapshot of client experience.

Many of the submissions were based on the direct and ongoing experience of community organisations and workers assisting migrants and refugees in their interaction with Australian government agencies. A very wide range of issues and activities was commented upon, including health, disability, welfare, employment, education, housing, immigration and taxation.

Overall, the strong message the Panel received from the submissions process and face-to-face meetings was that Access and Equity policy remained an important driver for achieving responsiveness to specific needs within Australia's CALD population and that the policy should continue to promote this.

Submissions from intermediaries and CALD clients made the point that while many people in Australia's CALD communities could rely on the effectiveness of Australian government services, many others could not, for the same reasons that Access and Equity policy was introduced decades ago—limited or no English language capability, lack of understanding of the Australian system, cultural barriers and multiple disadvantages that might arise through torture and trauma experiences, disability etc.

However, contributors felt that much of the impetus of the policy has been lost. Commitment and actual performance across Australian government agencies was assessed as highly variable. Some agencies were seen to be performing relatively well in implementing Access and Equity, with Centrelink and the Australian Taxation Office often mentioned positively; others were seen to be performing weakly or uninterested. Job Services Australia (JSA) was most frequently mentioned as not meeting Access and Equity requirements. Lack of agency commitment was seen to flow through to the performance of contracted service providers. Poor agency communication with CALD clients was frequently cited as a central feature in lack of agency responsiveness.

*“Culturally competent and appropriate service delivery is a whole of government concern and needs to be addressed as more than an immigration, settlement or population issue”*

**Submission from the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health**

These performance issues were perceived as broadly similar outside the capital cities, but compounded by problems of the smaller footprint of Australian government agencies in regional and remote centres. Local solutions and improvisation are often used to overcome these difficulties.

The problems underlying this variable performance were seen as flowing from lack of clarity of policy and its application, lack of clarity of what agencies are required to do, weak whole-of-government guidelines supporting Access and Equity action and lack of commitment arising from insufficient governance and accountability arrangements.

The solutions put forward centred on reinvigoration of Access and Equity through clarity of policy; strengthened implementation arrangements; clear performance indicators for agencies; and strengthened governance and accountability, including through independent audits of performance.

*“Clearer and measurable performance standards would... encourage the development of more strategic goals, and therefore greater accountability in delivering more accessible and equitable Australian government policies, programs and services”*

**Submission from Australian Human Rights Commission**

The Panel notes that submissions contained a plethora of highly valuable, detailed suggestions about models of best practice in delivering Access and Equity. It considers that these should be carefully studied and utilised in the development of better practice guides to support agencies in the implementation of Access and Equity.

The Panel received a number of submissions from state and territory government agencies and local government.

State and territory governments implement a variety of policies and approaches with similar aims to Access and Equity policy, often backed by legislation and sophisticated implementation mechanisms. State and territory government agencies encouraged the Australian Government to consider introduction of similar policies, including the possibility of legislative backing for Access and Equity.

Local governments, many of which have to work closely with diverse communities, noted their strong interest in successful Access and Equity policies and urged the importance of Australian government services effectively delivering to diverse communities on the ground.

The Panel's interaction with key Australian government agencies, both through submissions received and face-to-face meetings with senior officials confirmed that the level of commitment and the nature of approaches taken across agencies is highly differentiated. Some, such as Centrelink (in conjunction with the Department of Human Services) and the Australian Taxation Office have dedicated national resources driving Access and Equity approaches supported by agency-wide approaches to communication with CALD communities and clients. Other agencies do not have a detailed focus on Access and Equity and see it through the prism of other social policies such as 'Access to Justice' and 'Social Inclusion'. Some large and complex departments leave it to widely spread and differentiated program areas to implement Access and Equity on a more localised basis. Some agencies, not engaged directly in the provision of services to the community, see Access and Equity policy as not being applicable to their activities because of what they perceive as the 'service delivery focus' of the policy.

### 3.3 Access and Equity into the future

Cultural and linguistic diversity is embedded in Australian society now and will be in the future society we are building through immigration.

The Panel believes that the need for Access and Equity policy remains as relevant to today's Australia as it was at the time of its inception.

However, the Panel agrees with contributors that Access and Equity needs to be rejuvenated and strengthened through improvements to the policy itself, its implementation and accompanying governance and accountability arrangements.

### 3.4 Policy

The Panel considers it essential that the Australian Government engage effectively with, and be responsive to, cultural and linguistic diversity both in the national interest and in the interests of the communities and individuals concerned.

The Panel considers that the underpinnings of Access and Equity policy lie in the expectations of Australian citizens that their diversity will be respected, broad human rights considerations, achieving effective outcomes from our immigration policy and the simple concept of fairness in dealings with government. These are elaborated below:

- The Preamble to the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* acknowledges the diversity of Australia's citizenry and makes an important statement that such diversity is to be respected. Access and Equity policy has been one way of giving effect to that respect by making programs and services responsive and 'citizen-centric'.
- As noted by the Australian Human Rights Commission in its submission, the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to which Australia is a party, provides 'States with a positive duty to develop a policy which seeks to eliminate racism and promote understanding among all races...Access and Equity strategies adopted by successive Australian governments can be seen as a response to this positive duty'. The Access and Equity policy complements the Australian Government's National Anti-Racism Strategy. Elements of other Human Rights conventions to which Australia is a signatory are also relevant.<sup>39</sup>
- As a nation pursuing an active immigration policy now and into the future that will introduce increasing cultural diversity into our society, there is a strong national interest in ensuring full social and economic participation. Responsiveness of Australian government programs is an important facilitator of that participation.

*"The Parliament recognises that Australian citizenship represents full and formal membership of the community of the Commonwealth of Australia, and Australian citizenship is a common bond, involving reciprocal rights and obligations, uniting all Australians, while respecting their diversity..."*

**Australian Citizenship Act 2007**

<sup>39</sup> Australia is signatory to a number of international treaties and declarations in the field of human rights, including:

- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and
- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Source: Australian Human Rights Commission, 'What are human rights', [www.hreoc.gov.au/human\\_rights/about\\_human\\_rights.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/human_rights/about_human_rights.html)

- Fairness is a concept deeply embedded in the Australian society, culture and psyche. Australia is about giving a 'fair go' to everyone, or everyone starting from a 'level playing field' or 'the same line'. Ultimately, responsiveness to the cultural and linguistic circumstances of individual migrants is simply a matter of fairness.

Submissions acknowledged that Access and Equity policy since its inception had played the central role in ensuring responsiveness of Australian government agencies and services to Australia's increasingly diverse population.

Successive governments have introduced extensive social policy reforms and individual initiatives since the introduction of Access and Equity policy, including those dealing with particular groups or issues in society. All these initiatives have no doubt had benefit across the Australian society, including for CALD communities. However, the evidence of groups working with these communities is that the effectiveness of implementation of these policies and initiatives is weaker when applied to CALD communities. They consider that a strong and ongoing Access and Equity policy remains central to effectiveness of all Australian government programs. The Panel discusses the relationship between Access and Equity and a number of current social policy initiatives at Chapter 4.

### Renewal of commitment to Access and Equity

The Panel considers that a strong and continuing Access and Equity policy is needed at the Australian Government level to ensure responsiveness to the issues which are unique to some parts of Australia's CALD communities. These issues are vulnerabilities and barriers to participation in society, including low levels of English proficiency, refugee backgrounds, visible difference, lack of knowledge of the system of government in Australia, and general lack of knowledge about Australian cultural or societal norms. Other barriers include the assumptions of government and service provider staff regarding clients, and in some cases discrimination.

#### *Recommendation 1*

*That the Australian Government reaffirm its commitment to Access and Equity policy as the primary vehicle for ensuring responsiveness of the Australian Government to Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) population.*

## Clarity of activities covered by Access and Equity policy

Submissions to the Inquiry demonstrate that the current articulation of Access and Equity policy gives rise to confusion amongst Australian government agencies, service providers and clients themselves in relation to the nature of government activities which are subject to Access and Equity policy and the precise target groups for the policy.

Some government agencies have expressed the view that the policy is couched in a way that is solely focused on service delivery, thereby rendering it irrelevant to the activities of many Australian government agencies.

The Australian Government is engaged in a huge range of activities, all of which have community impacts. While proper application of Access and Equity policy is a priority in the service delivery area, the Australian Government also communicates and engages with the Australian community in many ways that do not involve what is generally regarded as service delivery. Clearly it is important that such engagement is equally effective with all sectors of the community. For that reason, it is important for the government to clarify that Access and Equity policy applies to these broader communication and engagement activities.

*“To encompass the business of non-service delivery departments and agencies, the inquiry may wish to consider embedding Access and Equity principles in to a communications and engagement framework. This approach will facilitate holistic consideration of CALD communities and their access to government beyond service delivery”*

**Submission from  
Department of Defence**

### Recommendation 2

*That Access and Equity policy encompass not only responsiveness in service delivery, but require all Australian government agencies, whether or not performing service delivery activities, when they engage and communicate with the broader community, to also ensure that they include effective communication and engagement with Australia’s CALD population.*

## Clarity of target group and objectives

The Panel noted from submissions that the generality of the policy label ‘Access and Equity’ and the various iterations of policy over time have given rise to misunderstandings about the main client group at which the policy is aimed and differing views about groups at which it should be aimed. For example, some have seen the policy focus as being directed to Australians with disabilities and access to buildings; others have advocated its application to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (the policy formally applied to this latter group for a period of

*“The general term ‘Access and Equity’ (should) be changed to specifically reflect the multicultural policy and to include the notion of participation in decision-making”*

**Submission from the Community Relations Commission for a multicultural New South Wales.**

time: 1989–2006). The generality of the policy term has also caused some confusion about the nature of the specific issues to be dealt with for the target group and the types of actions required. This lack of clarity has contributed to some uncertainty and lack of focus in its implementation.

The Panel considers that the general principle of responsiveness through Access and Equity should apply to all groups in the community when the Australian Government communicates, engages or delivers services. However, it considers that Australia’s CALD population, and those within it that need more focused responsiveness from the

Australian Government, is the specific target of the policy. This needs to be made clearer. It can be done by renaming the policy ‘Multicultural Access and Equity Policy’ and by adding the bylines ‘Respecting Diversity. Improving Responsiveness.’ to give greater clarity of intent.

The Panel notes that the Australian Government seeks to address the needs of other key groups in society through specific social policy initiatives such as ‘Closing the Gap’ for Indigenous peoples and that Access and Equity policy coverage would merely serve to create confusion and duplication of reporting effort.

### **Recommendation 3**

*That the key focus of Access and Equity policy be made more transparent by renaming it Multicultural Access and Equity Policy and by the introduction of an explanatory ‘byline’ which highlights some key elements of the policy—‘Respecting Diversity. Improving Responsiveness.’*

## **Clarity of commitment required from agencies**

*“Access and Equity Policy provides a positive obligation on government agencies to proactively consider the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse people, which complements the existing legislated antidiscrimination and fair treatment obligations”*

**Submission from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Access and Equity policy is currently articulated to Australian government agencies and interested stakeholders through a strategy and ‘Framework’ (the current Access and Equity Framework is at Attachment 4).

The Framework seeks to guide agencies on their Access and Equity responsibilities through four ‘principles’—Responsiveness, Communication, Accountability and Leadership. While the strategies urged on departments through the Framework are reasonable, submissions criticised the Framework as being too vague, in the sense that it makes generalised suggestions about what they might do, but does not provide any firm requirements

against which performance might be measurable. Agencies have also advised the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, in the course of its oversight process, of difficulties they have in responding to the generalised nature of the Framework.

The Panel considers that the Framework should be replaced with a clearer set of expectations of Australian government agencies' behaviour which also provides a clear-cut, objective basis for measurement of commitment and performance. The Panel agrees with the statement in the submission of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet that Access and Equity imposes 'a positive obligation on government agencies'. The Panel considers that the new document should move beyond the neutral language of a 'framework' and make it clear that these are agencies' 'obligations' towards Australia's diverse community.

#### **Recommendation 4**

*That the existing Access and Equity Strategy and Framework be updated and recast in the form of a set of firm commitments and implementation obligations on the part of agencies to Australia's CALD population (covering engagement, communications, policy, program design and service delivery) as set out in Attachment 5.*

The Panel considers that the new set of Access and Equity obligations for agencies should be driven by the values of respecting Australia's diversity by communicating and engaging and providing fair access to clients. The specific implementation obligations of the new arrangements are discussed under 'Implementation' below.

### **Achieving better alignment with other social policies**

The Panel has considered the alignment between Access and Equity policy and other key social policies in some detail in Chapter 4 and makes a recommendation on better alignment in that chapter.

*Recommendation 5—See Chapter 4*

## **3.5 Ensuring effective implementation**

An overwhelming and consistent theme of the submissions was that those working with Australian government agencies simply want them to make Access and Equity work 'on the ground' when they engage with, or deliver services to, CALD communities. While submissions noted that some agencies had developed effective practices for working with their CALD clients, shortfalls in practical implementation were extensively canvassed, as well as areas for improvement.

**Data on CALD clients** Submissions frequently expressed the view that many Australian government agencies did not have a strong sense of the multicultural nature of their client group (whether they interacted directly with them or through policies and programs delivered by third parties), did not collect relevant data in a systematic way and did not share such data if they had it.

*“High-level policy language around Access and Equity did not always translate to accessible services at the shopfront level”*

**Submission from Settlement Council of Australia**

**Communication** Submissions consistently identified the need for better communication with CALD clients as being central to improving performance in effectively implementing Access and Equity.

Lack of effective communication practices by Australian government agencies means exclusion for those culturally diverse clients whose English language proficiency is low or still developing or who have a low level of familiarity with Australia

and how the Australian government system works. This includes both outward communications in the form of promotions and advertising as well as responsive communication capacity.

With some exceptions, submissions cited poor and inconsistent efforts by Australian government agencies across the board and across the range of communication tools used by government.

*“The provision of professional and quality language services – that is, access to interpreters and to a lesser extent, translated materials – continues to be a major barrier to information and services for people not proficient in English”*

**Joint Submission from Councils of Social Service**

Despite the availability of interpreting services through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's national Translating and Interpreting Service, submissions frequently noted that agencies in many cases were unfamiliar with or did not use such services. In addition, from a client perspective, for those clients who sought to access the Translating and Interpreting Service themselves, the service was considered difficult to use because of a need for a certain amount of English language skill to access it in the first place.

Submissions noted that written material for clients of Australian government agencies was often expressed in complex language that would challenge a fluent English speaker. While many agencies make an effort to provide translated

versions of the material, those efforts were inconsistent both in terms of quality, simplicity and range of languages chosen.

The rapid moves by Australian government agencies to communicate, engage and provide services through telephone call centres and the Internet has compounded the communication problems for CALD clients with low English language proficiency who have extreme difficulty engaging with these services. Use of Internet-based services requires not only language skills but access to, and familiarity with, the appropriate technology. English-only websites or those with poorly designed language accessibility arrangements present insurmountable barriers to use for some clients.

Submissions noted that some agencies were skilled in the use of communication and engagement strategies to work with those CALD clients who, faced language barriers or lacked of experience with the Australian system. Some agencies had clearly thought through their communication strategies and delivered on them in an effective way, using a blend of communications approaches—using translators and interpreters or bilingual workers; preparing clearly understandable material in community languages appropriate to the audiences; accessible websites and active face-to-face outreach to community support organisations or individual clients themselves.

Centrelink was commended for its use of bilingual workers and the Australian Taxation Office was praised for its community outreach activities in Sydney and Melbourne. (Refer to case studies on page 59).

Submissions cautioned against an over-reliance on information strategies using information technology and social media, with preference being given to CALD-friendly customer service and face-to-face engagement in particular, along with communication via CALD community organisations or Migrant Resource Centres. Good signage at government premises is also valued. Other identified means of communication included the use of ethnic media for advertisements.

Effective Australia-wide arrangements for language services were considered essential to the delivery of Access and Equity to the CALD community. A number of submissions noted that the infrastructure which supports

*“... the Dutch and other non-English-speaking background (people) are excluded from valuable information unless they have an English-speaking escort through the maze...”*

**Submission from Dutchcare referring to accessibility problems on an Australian Government agency website**

*“Ensure the Internet is not the only way information is provided.” “The Australian Government could review information Internet sites and simplify ways users can give feedback, otherwise we’ll never know what works and what doesn’t”*

**Submission from Migrant Resource Centre of Tasmania**

*“... an Australian Government National Language Services Policy will signal its commitment to language services and to reaffirm the centrality of translating and interpreting in our multicultural policy and in the broader social inclusion agenda”*

**Submission from the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters**

*“The point that is often missed is that being able to access, or having equal access to, a service that does not meet a client’s needs does not equate to Access and Equity.”*

**Submission from the Refugee Council of Australia**

this in Australia remains weak. They called for development of an Australian government language services policy, including new guidelines on the use of interpreters as a means of setting strategic directions, as well as more effective and consistent promotion and advertising.

**Cultural awareness and competency** Submissions were concerned that a ‘one size fits all’ approach by Australian government agencies in development of policies, programs and services meant that many services were not designed to be culturally sensitive to a significant group of clients’ backgrounds and needs. This was frequently cited in submissions as a barrier to the achievement of accessibility and good outcomes for clients.

Lack of cultural capability within agencies and cultural competency on the part of their staff and service providers was also highlighted as a key difficulty. Submissions argued that agencies should improve their ability to engage with CALD clients either through increasing the diversity of their own staff or through effective cultural competency training for staff at all levels.

*“... the question of how well Access and Equity obligations are transmitted to contracted service providers and monitored is often unclear... an area of government service that is consistently raised as problematic for refugee and humanitarian entrants is Job Services Australia services (JSA).”*

**Submission from the Refugee Council of Australia**

**Australian Government funded services delivered through the state and territory governments or contracted service providers**

Submissions noted that changes to the approach to service delivery over the last decade have meant that Australian government funded services are increasingly delivered through partnerships and agreements with state and territory governments or through a wide range of third-party private sector and not-for-profit contractors. The point was regularly made that, in many cases, those delivering services through arrangements with the Australian Government appeared not to be aware of Access and Equity policy considerations and that their service delivery did not reflect it in practice.

## Driving implementation

The Panel considered that there is a complex set of reasons behind the variable, and in many cases, poor, implementation of Access and Equity policy by Australian government agencies. These include:

- lack of leadership
- lack of clarity on the part of agencies of what Access and Equity policy obliges them to do
- lack of clear and measurable performance indicators
- systemic issues related to whole-of-government practices and guidelines
- lack of cultural competency of staff in Australian government agencies

The Panel considers that, apart from the policy adjustments proposed in recommendations 1 to 4 to achieve greater policy clarity, there is a need for a combination of measures to reinvigorate practical implementation of Access and Equity in individual agencies. This involves making it clear what the minimum expectations are on agencies; individual agencies developing their own clear performance indicators in this area; dealing with systemic issues around Australian government policies and practices and giving agencies and staff the skills to deliver Access and Equity.

The relatively strong performance by agencies such as the Centrelink and the Australian Taxation Office in this area, as viewed by clients and intermediaries, shows that it can be done, using some better practice approaches already employed by those agencies. The characteristics of those agencies that are seen to perform better are a dedicated, national, point of leadership; clear planning for achieving Access and Equity objectives; understanding of their CALD client group; and effective means of engaging with CALD communities using multiple strategies for communication, including use of interpreters.

## Clarity on what agencies are required to do

The Panel considers that, consistent with recommendation 4 relating to Access and Equity 'obligations' on agencies, those obligations should be clearly spelt out. The Panel considers that the minimum implementation obligations should be as set out in the Multicultural Access and Equity implementation document at Attachment 5 and below.

The core minimum obligations are that each Australian government agency must:

- prepare a biennial Agency Multicultural Plan (the first plan covering 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2015, to be in place by 1 July 2013).
- the core elements to be included in the plan are:
  - assignment of a Senior Executive Service officer to be responsible for implementation of Access and Equity obligations in the agency

- provision for collection of ethnicity data on the CALD groups with which the agency engages and to which it delivers services, directly or indirectly
  - a stakeholder engagement strategy to understand CALD communities' interaction with the agency
  - provision to ensure that policies, programs, community interactions and service delivery (whether in-house or outsourced) are effective for CALD communities
  - a language and communication plan for CALD communities, including the use of languages other than English and incorporating the use of interpreters and translators
  - a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to the agency's engagement with, or outcome of its services to, CALD clients
  - provision for incorporation of Multicultural Access and Equity requirements in funding agreements with states or third-party service deliverers (or whole-of-government guidelines, if the agency is responsible for them)
  - training and development measures to ensure portfolio staff are appropriately equipped with cultural competency skills, and
  - arrangements to ensure affected CALD communities are able to provide feedback on agency Access and Equity performance.
- In the interests of transparency and engagement with CALD groups, agencies are to publish their Agency Multicultural Plans on departmental websites. Reporting against key performance indicators in those plans should be included in agency annual reports.

Given the multiplicity of Australian government agencies and the highly diverse nature of the activities which they perform, the Panel considers that it would be appropriate for responsibility to rest with the lead department in each portfolio as to whether its plan would cover the entire portfolio or whether, in addition to the departmental plan, one or more attached agencies within the portfolio should produce separate plans. There may be limited circumstances in which it is not appropriate or necessary for a highly specialised technical agency within a portfolio to produce, or be covered by, an Agency Multicultural Plan, in which case, exemption from the requirement should be sought in consultation with the Australian Multicultural Council.

Some Australian government agencies will already have arrangements in place that closely approximate these planning requirements; others will already have key components in place. To ensure effective development and implementation of the plans, it is important that agencies which have little or no capability in the area of Access and Equity are given

appropriate support. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship should, at the time of dissemination of updated Multicultural Access and Equity Policy, support Australian government agencies with a toolkit of resources and better practice guidelines. Use of an interdepartmental committee process might facilitate transmission of expertise.

#### **Recommendation 6**

*That the Australian Government disseminate updated Access and Equity policy and associated obligations to all of its agencies, together with a toolkit of resources and better practice guidelines prepared by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.*

### **Ensuring whole-of-government guidelines support Access and Equity**

The approach of Australian government agencies to many issues of Access and Equity implementation is driven in part by 'whole-of-government' approaches and guidelines which influence agency behaviour. A number of the areas of deficient performance identified in submissions are governed by such approaches and guidelines:

- data collection
- partnerships, agreements and contracts for delivery of services funded by the Australian Government
- communication activities, including use of the Internet and use of interpreters and translators, and
- cultural competency skills.

### **Improving data collection on CALD communities and clients**

The Panel agrees with the views expressed in submissions that current data collection across government is inadequate and is a major barrier to the effective planning and delivery of services for CALD clients. It also accepts that many Australian government funded agencies are unaware of the cultural and linguistic diversity of their clients.

The Panel has identified that the current whole-of-government standards relating to data collection on cultural and linguistic diversity are *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity*, developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 1999.<sup>40</sup> These were supplemented by *The Guide: Implementing the Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity*, prepared by the Commonwealth Interdepartmental Committee on Multicultural Affairs in 2001. Neither document appears well-known to agencies.

---

<sup>40</sup> ABS, 1289.0.

The Panel understands an update of the ABS Standards is expected in the next year.

The Panel welcomes the development of updated *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity* and considers that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship should work closely with the Australian Bureau of Statistics in dissemination and practical implementation of the Standards.

#### *Recommendation 7*

*That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship work closely with the Australian Bureau of Statistics in dissemination and practical implementation of updated 'Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity' being developed by the Bureau.*

### **Embedding Access and Equity in Australian government agreements and contracts**

Although there are some examples of good practice, to the extent that the Panel was able to ascertain, Access and Equity considerations are not routinely incorporated by agencies into Australian government partnerships and agreements with state and territory governments or into contracts with third-party providers. In order to drive better Access and Equity performance through Australian government funded programs, it is important that this be done progressively and that whole-of-government guidelines administered by the Department of Finance and Deregulation be reviewed and updated to provide guidance.

#### *Recommendation 8*

*That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into funding partnerships and agreements with states and territories and whole-of-government guidelines on tender specifications and contractual arrangements for outsourced service delivery by its agencies.*

### **Communicating effectively with CALD communities and clients**

The Panel agrees with the views in submissions that upgrading of communication practices of Australian government agencies with CALD communities and individuals is absolutely central to achieving improved responsiveness. This applies to the many forms of communication in use. Agencies need to look at all channels of communication as a whole and their responsiveness to CALD communities and individuals. The Panel has already recommended that development of communication strategies be a core obligation of agencies.

Many submissions pointed out that, for communities and groups with the most difficult communication issues, face-to-face communication was invaluable, but practised by relatively few agencies. While it may be understandable that agencies feel that their outreach is limited by staffing resources and distance, the Panel notes that the National Broadband Network will offer growing opportunities for long-distance face-to-face communication through forms of videoconferencing.

In addition, the whole-of-government guidelines in these areas need improvement.

There is currently no whole-of-government policy or strategy for Australian government communication or delivery of services by its agencies in languages other than English. Some guidelines exist in relation to use of translators and interpreters, but these are old and outdated—*Department of Immigration and Citizenship Language Services Guidelines: A Toolkit for Commonwealth Agencies 2002*. The Panel understands these guidelines are currently being revised. This flows from the Inquiry into selected agencies' use of interpreters by the Ombudsman in March 2009, which noted many deficiencies in performance and recommended updating of the guidelines.<sup>41</sup> The Panel supports development of a whole-of-government policy covering all forms of communication in languages other than English.

Another important form of Australian government communication is advertising. This is governed by guidelines developed by the Department of Finance and Deregulation. The Panel understands that the Department of Finance and Deregulation is conducting important and ground breaking research into the use of different media by CALD communities. The Panel considers that communication advertising guidelines should be reviewed and updated by the Australian Government in the context of the findings of this report and of the Department of Finance and Deregulation research.

In relation to community views of the responsiveness of Australian government's use of the Internet to the language needs of CALD communities, the Panel notes that this is an area that needs significant improvement. Even a cursory examination of a variety of Australian government websites shows inconsistent approaches to use of languages other than English. A small number, of which Centrelink is the prime example, clearly reveal a thought-through strategy with relatively easy upfront access for a person with no or poor English language skills to a wide range of material in community languages. Others have a limited amount of material in languages other than English, but sometimes this is very difficult to access in the first place, especially if the person has no English-language skills. Some, including the Australian Government portal, do not appear to have any material at all in languages other than English.

<sup>41</sup> Commonwealth Ombudsman, *Use of interpreters*, Report no. 3, 2009..

The Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) has oversight of Australian government websites, but the Panel understands it does not have the authority to enforce its views on particular issues. The Panel notes that AGIMO has issued a credible set of guidelines—Better Practice Checklist 19. Access and Equity Issues for Websites 2008, but that these are not being observed in a fully effective way by many agencies. The Panel considers that these guidelines should be reviewed and upgraded in the light of government decisions on its report.

#### *Recommendations 9 to 11*

*9. That the Australian Government develop a whole-of-government language policy on communication by its agencies in languages other than English, including the use of interpreters and translators.*

*10. That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into its whole-of-government communication and advertising guidelines.*

*11. That the Australian Government incorporate Access and Equity considerations and obligations into upgraded whole-of-government guidelines on the use of the Internet as a communication and service delivery tool by its agencies.*

### **Cultural competency**

The Panel agrees with the views expressed in submissions that cultural competency skills of staff, while strong in some agencies, are weak in many others. The Panel notes that this has an impact at all levels in an agency, affecting policy development, program design and service delivery. This capability needs to be re-invigorated if Access and Equity is to be successfully delivered. As noted in submissions, one way to do this is for agencies with extensive contact with CALD communities to recruit staff from a wide range of diverse backgrounds. In addition to this strategy, the Panel considers that, more broadly, upgrading of staff capability, at all levels, through cultural competency training is needed.

This needs to be incorporated in both centralised development activities and material sponsored by the Australian Public Service Commission and individual agency training.

Over the longer term, the growing relevance of cultural competency training will require the development of a broader quality framework to govern the quality and supply of programs and providers in the cross-cultural area.

#### **Recommendation 12**

*That the Australian Government assess or develop training packages on Access and Equity policy and cultural competency and incorporate them into Australian Public Service Commission sponsored courses and individual agency training on leadership, policy development and service delivery.*

### **3.6 Upgrading governance and accountability**

The Panel notes that the effectiveness of delivery of any social policy is closely related to the effectiveness of governance and accountability arrangements.

Improving governance and accountability was a strong theme in many submissions, with a wide range of issues canvassed, including changing the coordinating agency, introducing supporting legislation, developing objective performance indicators against which agency performance could be measured, agencies publishing performance outcomes, empowering clients to give feedback and introducing independent audit of performance.

The Panel agrees that there is a need for improvements in these areas. The opinions put forward in submissions and the views of the Panel are discussed below.

*“While policy can always be improved, this will not change anything if there is no accountability”*

**Submission from  
Multicultural Youth South  
Australia**

#### **Stronger governance**

Some submissions argued that a higher level of authority was needed for the governance of Access and Equity policy within the Australian Government. They argued that this could and should be achieved through enabling legislation and transfer of administrative responsibility for Access and Equity policy to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, where it was located prior to 1996. New South Wales and Victorian government agencies argued that their legislative and administrative arrangements provided suitable models.

The Panel is aware that these proposals are related to the broader debates about whether or not there is a need for legislation to enshrine multicultural policy at the Australian Government level. The Panel notes that in its recent review of multicultural policy, the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council did not recommend legislation and there are no Australian government plans for such legislation.

While there may be grounds for this wider debate to continue, the

Panel notes that improvements in Access and Equity responsiveness can be achieved quickly and effectively without legislative backing. Its recommendations are therefore based on upgraded policy and administrative responses.

The Panel notes that the elevation of the Parliamentary Secretary position which oversees Multicultural Affairs (within the Immigration and Citizenship portfolio), to Ministerial status is a positive step in recognising the significance of multicultural policy.

In relation to administrative responsibility, the Panel considers that as long as Australian government administrative arrangements place multicultural policy within the Immigration and Citizenship portfolio, it is appropriate that accompanying Access and Equity policy also be administered by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

It notes that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has a strong and continuing interest in successful participation of the Access and Equity target group in Australian society. The Australian Government has also assigned a formal role in monitoring a strengthened Access and Equity policy to the Australian Multicultural Council located within the Immigration and Citizenship Portfolio.

The Panel notes, however, that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship will need to significantly strengthen its internal arrangements to effectively implement the proposals in this report and to maintain ongoing coordination and oversight of Access and Equity policy in conjunction with the Australian Multicultural Council. The Panel agrees with the many submissions that point out that current Access and Equity performance reports published by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship need to have wider coverage and more objectively based analysis of agencies' performance. The agency Access and Equity obligations put forward by the Panel in Recommendation 6 should facilitate this.



Other aspects of the accountability arrangements will need to be strengthened to support the roles of these two bodies. The Panel has proposed that the Australian Multicultural Council be given the responsibility for providing feedback to agencies on their Agency Multicultural Plans and their performance reports. The Panel discusses further supporting arrangements below. The Panel also discusses below the desirability of aggregate reporting being available not only to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the parliament, but also to Cabinet.

**Recommendation 13**  
*That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship retain responsibility for coordination of Access and Equity policy, monitoring of implementation and consolidated performance reporting across all Australian government agencies, subject to review and oversight by the Australian Multicultural Council.*

**Independent audit of performance**

A strong and consistent theme in submissions was that reporting and accountability based on self-assessment reporting submitted by agencies did not provide sufficiently rigorous analysis of actual performance. Many submissions called for administrative oversight to be supplemented by some form of independent audit.

The Panel agrees that this is necessary. The appropriate body within the Australian Government to do this is the Auditor-General. In the context of its role in performance audits of Australian government agencies, the Auditor-General has specific powers of access and scrutiny and reports of the Auditor-General are independent, tabled in Parliament and publicly available.

The Panel considers that the recommendations it has made in relation to clarity of agency obligations and Agency Multicultural Plans (including the requirement for individual agencies to develop and publish performance indicators in those plans) will greatly facilitate external scrutiny by the Auditor-General.

*“Given the significant number of departments and agencies required to discharge Access and Equity obligations, independent assessment needs to be undertaken by external auditing firms... upon release, these reports should provide stakeholders with a formal opportunity to provide feedback to the relevant government department or agency...”*  
**Submission from Anglicare Sydney**

**Recommendation 14**  
*That the Australian Government request the Auditor-General to undertake periodic performance audits of selected groups of agencies’ performance in meeting their obligations under Access and Equity policy.*

## Empowering clients to give feedback

Many submissions made the point that an important element in achieving responsiveness was for clients to be empowered to give feedback and make complaints to government agencies. CALD clients who faced the most barriers to accessing Australian government services are correspondingly the ones least likely to complain owing to language and cultural barriers and unfamiliarity with the Australian system.

For that reason, the Panel considers that it is important that agencies review their complaints mechanisms to ensure that they are truly accessible to CALD communities and individual clients whose feedback will help improve responsiveness.

Submissions also suggested that it would be useful to have some mechanism, independent of individual agencies, to collect CALD community and client views of responsiveness and provide them to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Australian Multicultural Council. The Panel considers that there is merit in this approach and that the existing process whereby the Department of Immigration and Citizenship commissions the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia be continued and adapted to perform this role within the Access and Equity framework recommended by the Panel.

### *Recommendations 15 and 16*

*15. That Australian government agencies review the accessibility of their complaints mechanisms to CALD communities and adjust them as necessary in consultation with CALD communities.*

*16. That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship continue to commission the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia to provide structured feedback from CALD communities on their perceptions of agencies' Access and Equity performance within the new arrangements.*

## Alignment of social policy reporting to Cabinet

A number of submissions noted that existing reporting on Access and Equity performance was not effectively used to determine strategic actions for future agency performance. The Panel considers that the reporting and accountability regime that it has recommended would significantly strengthen the quality of reports available to the Australian Government.

The Panel considers that Access and Equity reporting prepared by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in conjunction with the Australian Multicultural Council, together with any available reports of the Auditor-General, should be periodically considered by the Australian Cabinet, preferably at the same time as performance reporting on other social policy issues.

#### **Recommendation 17**

*That Access and Equity reporting prepared by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Australian Multicultural Council, together with any available reports by the Auditor-General, be considered by the Australian Cabinet at the same time as biennial reporting flowing from Social Inclusion Policy.*

### **Making use of other reporting and analysis tools**

During the course of the Inquiry, the Panel's attention was drawn to the *Review of Government Service Provision* and *Report on Government Services* (RoGS).

The *Review of Government Service Provision* was established by Heads of Government (now the Council of Australian Governments or COAG) in 1993 to help inform improvements to the effectiveness and efficiency of government services across Australia. One of the key terms of reference of the review was to 'measure and publish annually data on the equity, efficiency and cost effectiveness of Government services'.

The 2011 edition of the *Report on Government Services* (RoGS) focused on the outcomes of services across 15 overarching government service areas. It also addressed service provision to people from non-English speaking backgrounds as a cross-cutting issue.

Significantly, the report highlighted the difficulty in generating this information due to the paucity of data in existence, and the variety of classification systems used to describe this cohort. The report stated that improving the management of cross-cutting policy issues, such as service provision to people from non-English speaking backgrounds, can contribute to more effective and efficient service provision.

The Panel notes that there is little evidence that the RoGS is used by agencies to measure performance and outcomes in relation to CALD clients. The Panel considers it important that this sophisticated vehicle be utilised where possible.

**Recommendation 18**

*That the Australian Government explore, in conjunction with states and territories, the use of the 'Report on Government Services' (RoGS) process to gain a better understanding of Access and Equity performance in relation to CALD clients.*

**Research**

During its Inquiry, the Panel had access to some high quality research on settlement experiences of CALD communities in Australia, including those which might be regarded as target groups for Access and Equity policy. The Panel noted that there has been some increasing interest in research in this area in recent years, but from a very low base.

Given the importance of current and likely future immigration flows to Australia's development, it is important that there be a strong evidence base on the practical outcomes of these policies and the effectiveness of interaction of Australian government services with CALD communities and clients. This evidence base should also be expanded to cover the experiences of long-term temporary entrants who increasingly form an important part of Australia's migration mix.

**Recommendation 19**

*That the Australian Government consider adequacy of current provision for research, including national research priorities, on the practical outcomes of the migration program. This assessment should particularly include research on interactions between the Australian Government and Access and Equity target groups and interactions with temporary entrants.*

**Other Issues**

The Panel received a number of detailed submissions and strong Queensland-based representations during the face-to-face consultation process in relation to access to services by New Zealand Non-Protected Special Category Visa (SCV) holders, who moved to Australia from New Zealand after February 2001.

Under policy introduced by the Australian Government in 2001, in the context of arrangements for a reciprocal social security agreement between Australia and New Zealand, SCV holders can enter and live in Australia indefinitely without meeting globally applied visa criteria, but do not have 'Permanent Resident' status. They cannot access a range of government services without first qualifying for permanent residence by meeting global migration criteria.

New Zealand citizens entering Australia on this temporary basis have an advantage over citizens of other countries in that they can freely enter and live in Australia, with access to the labour market, without meeting the long-term residence criteria applied to other nationals. However, the presence of many thousands of New Zealand citizen temporary residents with increasingly long-term periods of stay raises the potential for a variety of social consequences. A proportion of this group are from CALD backgrounds.

Submissions noted that many New Zealand citizens in this situation have limited access to employment, training and other programs, and were forced into low-paid or low-skilled jobs. These in turn result in long-term social impacts such as over-representation in juvenile justice, underperformance in numeracy and literacy, substance abuse, homelessness and suicide. The point was also made to the Panel that many people in this circumstance were unaware both before and after arrival of the very limited access to benefits within Australia.

The growing population of long-term temporary residents of New Zealand origin is occurring in the context of steadily increasing flows of people, frequently from CALD backgrounds, staying temporarily in Australia for periods longer than one year under a variety of immigration arrangements—temporary skilled workers, students and working holidaymakers. A proportion of these temporary residents qualify under global criteria to remain in Australia as permanent residents, with a pathway to citizenship.

The Panel notes that the question of entitlements for temporary residents is outside its terms of reference.

At the same time, Access and Equity policy does contain an expectation that the Australian Government will communicate clearly and effectively with people who use its services about their benefits and entitlements. The Panel considers it important that long-term temporary entrants to Australia, particularly New Zealand citizens contemplating long-term temporary residence, have access to coordinated, whole-of-government information provision on their circumstances, particularly benefits and entitlements, both before and after arrival in Australia.

#### *Recommendation 20*

*That the Australian Government ensure that agencies give clear and coordinated, whole-of-government advice to long-term temporary entrants to Australia, particularly New Zealand citizens contemplating long-term temporary residence in Australia, both before and after arrival, on their entitlements.*

## Case studies and personal glimpses





### **Case study: Community engagement by the Australian Tax Office**

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) conducts a range of face-to-face engagement activities, including regular meetings with peak bodies and community leaders, and consultation forums with established and newly-arrived communities. Two consultation forums are held each year, one in Melbourne and one in Sydney. These meetings provide an opportunity for CALD communities to provide feedback to the ATO and for the ATO to better understand the needs of these communities. 'By showing the human face of the organisation through these activities we are able to overcome any potential fear of government amongst these groups and position the ATO as a credible, trusted source of information and advice'.



### **Case Study: Anglicare Sydney Migrant and Refugee Services**

Anglicare Sydney released *The Long Way Home* (2009) report examining the adequacy of housing assistance given to African refugees to help them secure decent medium to long-term housing in Western Sydney...The research demonstrated that access to decent housing that is affordable and sustainable has not been achieved for many African community members in western Sydney, as a consequence of public and private rental shortages. Other barriers to securing housing included: unaffordable housing, unsafe housing conditions, the housing system as a 'maze' that locks African refugees out of opportunities, discrimination towards refugees and the impact of refugee mental health when seeking housing.

Photo courtesy AMES

### Reactions to government telephone services

*"People accessing government services via phone are faced with complicated messages, lengthy waiting periods and incomprehensible choices. To improve access, use real human resources to respond in a timely manner with access to interpreters"*

**Submission from Southern Health cultural Responsiveness Committee**

*"People need to be educated on how to access services via telephone even though they offer multilingual services. The prompts are confusing. Even calling the Ambulance Service represents a major problem for a person with language barriers living in the bush with no proper street address"* **Submission from Lightning Ridge and Region Transcultural Community Council**

*"One client presented a printout of a job that the JSA agency gave them instructing them to apply for the job online. This client had no computer skills so how could they apply for the job?" service provider quoted in* **Submission from Refugee Council of Australia**



### Complaints Procedures

"Many CALD consumers...do not feel able or supported to engage with complaint mechanisms on any level" **Submission from Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia**

### Case Study: some positive perceptions of Centrelink

"Centrelink worked effectively with a client who had severe mental health (issues) and spoke no English. They were sensitive to her issue and had an interpreter available whenever she was able to attend the Centrelink office" **Submission from Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of New South Wales**

"Of those departments that ageing non-English-speaking background people and their associated agencies have most contact with, Centrelink stands out as one which has adapted the most to the needs of people of CALD backgrounds. This is because it has made a greater effort to accommodate first languages in phone contact, provide face-to-face services, conduct outreach services to promote and review its services and publish newsletters in first languages for dissemination to ethnic and multicultural organisations" **Submission from Dutchcare**

"Centrelink Financial Information Service is very keen, has an open door and provides group talks plus one-to-one and is able to demystify financial issues for older migrants. They were very approachable" **Submission from Councils on the Ageing (COTA Australia)** quoting a Tasmanian workshop participant



## Chapter 4: Access and Equity and other social policies



## 4.1 Introduction

Access and Equity policy does not operate in isolation from other Australian government social policies.

Although Access and Equity policy has been in existence for decades, it must operate in the context of, and in concert with, social policies adopted by governments from time-to-time to deal with the needs of specific groups in the community or specific social issues.

The Panel examined two areas of current government social policy, one dealing with a broad set of social objectives—the Social Inclusion Agenda—and the other dealing with a specific social issue—the National Disability Strategy—to consider what interconnections might exist and how these might be shaped for the future.

## 4.2 Social Inclusion Agenda

The Australian Government's Social Inclusion Agenda (SIA) aims to build a stronger, fairer Australia in which all Australians feel valued and have the resources, opportunities and capabilities to learn, work, engage and have a voice.<sup>42</sup> The Australian Government's statement on social inclusion, *A Stronger, Fairer Australia*, outlines six priority areas for reform:

1. targeting jobless families with children to increase work opportunities, improve parenting and build capacity
2. improving the life chances of children at greatest risk of long-term disadvantage
3. reducing the incidence of homelessness
4. improving outcomes for people living with disability or mental illness and their carers
5. closing the gap for Indigenous Australians, and
6. breaking the cycle of entrenched and multiple disadvantage in particular neighbourhoods and communities.

In implementing these priorities, the Australian Government is also committed to helping vulnerable new arrivals and refugees, with the government monitoring progress via the social inclusion measurement and reporting framework.

### Reporting processes

The SIA is supported by four reporting mechanisms.

First, Social Inclusion Strategic Change Indicators Reporting, which monitors progress in areas of government policy and service delivery likely to influence the six social inclusion priority areas. The strategic change indicators are reported on by relevant departments in their annual reports.

---

<sup>42</sup> [www.socialinclusion.gov.au](http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au)

Second, *How Australia is Faring*, an independent report by the Australian Social Inclusion Board that provides a statistical snapshot of the nature and extent of social inclusion in Australia. This report is produced every two years, the first edition was published in 2010, and the second edition is scheduled for release in July 2012.

Third, the annual Australian Social Inclusion Board Annual Report, provides information about the progress of the SIA to the Minister for Social Inclusion.

Fourth, the annual Council of Australian Governments, Reform Council reports against six national partnership agreements that include references to social inclusion. The six partnerships include the areas of health, education, skills/workforce development, disability, affordable housing and Indigenous matters. The objectives of these partnerships overlap with the SIA.

*“It is important to acknowledge that the Australian social inclusion agenda contains minimal references to CALD and refugee communities...as a starting point, the social inclusion agenda should acknowledge CALD and refugee communities as a distinct priority group, so that the agenda can be better integrated (in principle) with the Access and Equity Strategy”*

**Submission from Anglicare Sydney**

## Social inclusion toolkit

A critical part of the SIA is the Australian Public Service Social Inclusion Policy Design and Delivery Toolkit which was launched in 2009. The Australian Government has decided that its agencies are required to use the six-step social inclusion method when designing, developing, coordinating and delivering policies and programs.

The six steps in the social inclusion method of policy design and delivery are:

1. identify groups at risk of exclusion (including communities experiencing concentrations of disadvantage and exclusion, with particular attention given to vulnerable new arrivals and refugees)
2. analyse the nature and causes of disadvantage and exclusion
3. strengthen protective factors and reduce risk factors
4. work with other agencies to coordinate efforts across government and other sectors
5. (re)design delivery systems and promote changes in culture, and
6. establish a clear implementation plan and monitor delivery.

## Links to Access and Equity

Under the SIA, people from CALD backgrounds are not identified as a specific priority group.

However, the SIA does acknowledge that such clients may experience disadvantage due to factors such as: discrimination; low English language skills; interrupted education or employment history as a result of migration experiences; and difficulty gaining employment in Australia.<sup>43</sup>

As part of the SIA, the Australian Government launched *Foundations for a Stronger, Fairer Australia* in 2011. The report reviews government actions in the SIA priority areas and considers what the government is doing to support multiculturalism and assist newly arrived migrants and humanitarian and refugee entrants begin their lives in Australia.<sup>44</sup>

The Panel notes that new arrivals and refugees are explicitly included in the first step of the Social Inclusion Toolkit. However, it also notes that while the toolkit steps may reflect concerns of some CALD clients, none of the steps respond directly to the needs of people with limited English language skills.

Submissions to the Inquiry that mentioned the SIA, while welcoming its broad intent, generally expressed the view that CALD communities did not see how the SIA was addressing their specific circumstances and needs, even if they were in areas of coverage of the agenda. In effect, they did not see Access and Equity policy being visibly applied within this agenda.

The Panel considers that, in order for the SIA to be fully effective in addressing CALD Access and Equity target groups within its priorities, Access and Equity needs to be explicitly introduced into policy language and implementation strategies.

<sup>43</sup> Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Submission to the Access and Equity Inquiry, March 2012, p. 2–3.

<sup>44</sup> Australian Government, *Foundations for a Stronger, Fairer Australia*, 2011, p. 30.

## 4.3 National Disability Strategy

The vision of the National Disability Strategy is ‘an inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens’. The strategy was developed by the Australian, state, territory and local governments and was formally endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on 3 February 2011.

The Strategy acknowledges that:

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds—in particular newly arrived migrants such as refugees and special humanitarian entrants—can be particularly vulnerable. Those with disability are likely to experience multiple disadvantages. Lack of accessible information, communication difficulties or cultural sensitivities and differences can create barriers to services and support.<sup>45</sup>

### Links to Access and Equity

Access and Equity policy and the National Disability Strategy have similar objectives including: non-discrimination, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity, equality of opportunity, and accessibility.

A number of submissions to the Access and Equity Inquiry noted that Australian government programs and services do not adequately respond to CALD people with disability, and that there needs to be greater integration of disability and Access and Equity policies.

The Panel notes that the National Disability Strategy already contains reference to the particular circumstances of the Access and Equity target group and considers that as strategy develops and is implemented over time, Access and Equity language and implementation approaches should continue to be explicitly incorporated.

*“Whilst 15.4 per cent of people with disabilities in WA are of CALD backgrounds, only 3 per cent access disability support services... All people with disability face barriers to social participation—access to employment, technology, social activity and economic well-being, however people from NESB are more likely to face deeper forms of marginalisation...EDAC attributes the low service uptake to a continuing lack of engagement of service providers to people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds as well as their lack of awareness about appropriate disability service provision to these clients”*

**Submission from Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre, Western Australia**

<sup>45</sup> Australian Government, *National Disability Strategy 2010-12*, p. 14.



## 4.4 Family law reform

Family law and its reform is a significant issue for CALD communities. The Panel notes that a Family Law Council report has indicated:

There has been little investigation to date of the barriers that face people from new and emerging communities in accessing the family law system, and there is limited knowledge of how services in the system are attempting to respond to the needs of families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and the challenges they face in doing so.<sup>46</sup>

Barriers to accessing the family law system include 'a lack of knowledge about the law and a lack of awareness of available services; language and literacy barriers; cultural and religious barriers that inhibit help-seeking outside the community; negative perceptions of the courts and family relationships services; social isolation; a lack of collaboration between migrant services and the family law system; a fear of government agencies; a lack of culturally responsive services and bicultural personnel; legislative factors; and cost and resource issues.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Family Law Council, *Improving the Family Law System for clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds*, A Report to Attorney-General, February 2012, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid* p. 3

## 4.5 Creating linkages between new social policy and Access and Equity

Virtually all social policies and programs developed over time by successive Australian governments will have an interaction with, and impact on, Australia's CALD communities.

The purpose of Access and Equity policy is to ensure that these interactions are fully effective in that they are able to deal with the specific needs and circumstances of target groups within these communities and achieve equitable outcomes compared to those of broader communities.

Specific social policies are generally aimed at ensuring the well-being of the whole or, specific parts of, the community or dealing with specific issues. Policymakers will no doubt regard as implicit in these policies that CALD communities will be equal beneficiaries. However, submissions to the Inquiry have noted, where Access and Equity policy considerations are not included in policy and program design and implementation mechanisms do not involve engagement with CALD communities, nor communication in languages other than English and culturally competent staff, the effectiveness of the program will be limited.

The Panel considers that it is important that appropriate interlinkages are achieved between policies, so as to ensure that when subject-specific social policy agendas are being implemented, they function effectively for Access and Equity target groups. This can best be done by incorporating Access and Equity policy considerations and implementation strategies into other social policies.

### *Recommendation 5*

*That Access and Equity policy considerations be incorporated into all Australian government social policy initiatives, such as the Social Inclusion Agenda, Disability Strategy and policy on homelessness.*



Attachments

## Attachment 1: Events in the history of the Australian Government's Access and Equity policy

From the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, multicultural policy remained focused on equality of opportunity and cultural maintenance. However, during this period, the issue of sensitivity of mainstream services to migrant needs arose.

In this context, the Galbally Committee, headed by prominent Melbourne lawyer Frank Galbally, was established in 1977 and given the task of reviewing post-arrival programs and services for migrants, to examine their changing needs and to make sure that these were being effectively met.

In 1978 this resulted in the watershed document *Migrant Services and Programs: Report of the Review of Post Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants* (commonly referred to as the Galbally Report). The report recognised for the first time the need for comprehensive data on the participation of migrants in all relevant programs as a prerequisite to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of all Commonwealth programs and services used by migrants.

1979—The *Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs Act 1979* established the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) in accordance with recommendation 49 of the Galbally Report.

1982—In July AIMA conducted an evaluation of programs and services. This reiterated the need for migrants to have equal access to general programs and services irrespective of their cultural or linguistic background.

1986—In April the report to parliament *Access and Equity in the Delivery of Federal Government Services and Programs to Migrants* was released.

1987—In March the Commonwealth established the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, replacing AIMA.

1988—*A Fair Go, A Fair Share: Access and Equity for a Multicultural Australia, Access and Equity Report No. 1* was released.

1989—Adoption of the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia... *Sharing our Future* extended the Access and Equity Strategy focus to all groups that might face barriers of race, religion, language or culture, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; Australian children of non-English speaking background; and women from these groups, who may face a double disadvantage.

1992—An evaluation of the Access and Equity Strategy found that while Access and Equity principles were increasingly visible in performance reporting and literature, they were not yet permeating the core cultures and practices of government departments.

The government endorsed the evaluation report and all of its 43 recommendations, including that the OMA coordinate an Access and Equity review report to be tabled in parliament each year.

1993—All Australian government departments and agencies began contributing to the annual Access and Equity report. The report was tabled in both houses of parliament for the first time.

1996—In January *A Fair Go For All: Report on Migrant Access and Equity* was released. It is the report of the first federal parliamentary inquiry into the extent to which Access and Equity principles were being applied in the delivery of services to migrants.

1998—The *Charter of Public Service for a Culturally Diverse Society* was formally launched.

2002—The then Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs initiated a review of annual reporting arrangements for cultural and linguistic diversity. The review made a number of recommendations for Access and Equity, including mainstreaming Access and Equity reporting.

2005—The Access and Equity Strategy had its 20th anniversary and the *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity* policy was evaluated (including the Access and Equity Strategy). The evaluation suggested greater ownership and accountability of agencies in ensuring that their programs are fair and equitable.

2006—A new framework, Accessible Government Services for All, was developed to replace and simplify the charter. While retaining key principles, it simplified the language used and aligned performance indicators with the principles. It also streamlined agency reporting, sharing of good practices and key performance challenges.

2006—It was decided that agencies would continue to provide annual contributions to the Access and Equity reports, but they would be published every two years rather than yearly.

2009—In March the first two-yearly Access and Equity Report was tabled in parliament.

2011—In February the government launched *The People of Australia—Australia's Multicultural Policy*. One of the recommendations of the policy was for the new Australian Multicultural Council to manage the Access and Equity Strategy to help strengthen the independence of Access and Equity reporting from government and provide for a more robust Access and Equity Framework.

Source: Australian Government, Access and Equity in Government Services 2008–10, Appendix B.

### Attachment 2: State and territory approaches to Access and Equity

This table sets out Australian state and territory approaches to Access and Equity.

State or Territory	Relevant legislation	Relevant policies and plans
Australian Capital Territory	Human Rights Act 2004 ACT Discrimination Act 1991	The Canberra Plan—Towards Our Second Century  Multicultural Strategy 2010-13
New South Wales	Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000  Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)	White Paper: Cultural Harmony: The Next Decade 2002-2012  Multicultural Policies and Services Program (includes a plan and a framework)
Northern Territory	Anti-Discrimination Act 1996	Building on the Territory's Diversity – A multicultural policy for migrant and ethnic Territorians.  Language Services Policy, Northern Territory Government
Queensland	Multicultural Recognition Bill 2011  Anti-Discrimination Act 1991	A multicultural future for all of us: Queensland Multicultural Policy 2011  Queensland Multicultural Action Plan 2011–14  Language Services Policy: A multicultural future for all of us
South Australia	Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)  South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission Act 1980	South Australia's Strategic Plan 2011
Tasmania	Anti-Discrimination Act 1998	Tasmania Together Plan  Tasmanian Multicultural Policy  Principles for Tasmania's Culturally Diverse Society
Victoria	Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006  Equal Opportunity Act 2010  Multicultural Victoria Act 2011	All of Us (Victoria's Multicultural Policy)  Language Services Policy
Western Australia	Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)	WA Charter of Multiculturalism  Implementing the Principles of Multiculturalism Locally: A planning guide for Western Australian local governments  Western Australian Language Services Policy 2008

### Attachment 3: List of organisations and individuals making submissions to the inquiry

The Inquiry received a total of 136 submissions (125 submissions and 11 supplementary submissions) during the consultation process.

#### Peak bodies and organisations

AMES	Foundation House, the Victorian
Anglicare Sydney	Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc.
Anti-Multi Discrimination Group	Fronditha Care
Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers Australia on behalf of the Victorian Translators and Interpreters Group	Health Consumers Council Western Australia Inc.
Australian Communications Consumer Action Network	Islamic Council of Queensland Inc.
Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Inc.	Lightning Ridge and Region Transcultural Community Council Inc.
Australian Multicultural Community Services	Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre
Australian Society of Anaesthetists	The Maltese Australian Gold Coast Association Inc.
Autism Advisor Program	Melaleuca Refugee Centre
Bethel Christian Fellowship, Camira QLD	Mental Health in Multicultural Australia
Beyondblue	Metro Migrant Resource Centre (2)
Brisbane Sikh Temple (Gurdwara) Inc.	Migration Institute of Australia
Care with Me Inc.	Migrant Resource Centre, Southern Tasmania Inc.
Centre for Culture, Ethnicity & Health	Multicultural Communities Council Gold Coast Inc.
Chinese Australian Services Society Ltd.	Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW
Chinese Community Council of Australia, Victorian Chapter	Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia)
The Community of South Sudan and Other Marginalised Areas Association	Multicultural Youth South Australia Inc.
Councils on the Ageing (COTA) Australia	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd.
Dutchcare Ltd. (Victoria) (2)	National Ethnic Disability Alliance
Ethnic Communities' Council of Queensland	NSW Auburn Turkish Islamic Cultural Centre
Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Inc.	NSW Multicultural Health Managers Forum
Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre	NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors
Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia	

OriginsInfo (2)

Pacific Indigenous Nations Network  
Gold Coast

Pacific Island Reference Group Inc.

Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre,  
Multicultural Women's Morning Tea Group

Queensland Council of Social Service  
Inc. on behalf of the National Network of  
Councils of Social Service

Queensland Pacific Island  
Workers Network

Queensland Program of Assistance to  
Survivors of Torture and Trauma Inc.

Refugee Council of Australia (2)

Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council

Settlement Council of Australia

South Eastern Region Migrant  
Resource Centre

Southern Health Cultural  
Responsiveness Committee

Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)

Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre

Sydney Multicultural Community  
Services Inc.

TAFE NSW

Townsville Multicultural Support  
Group, Community Action for a  
Multicultural Society

Yarra Settlement Forum

### Australian Government

Australian Human Rights Commission

Australian Taxation Office

Department of Defence

Department of the Prime Minister  
and Cabinet

The Family Law Council,  
Attorney-General's Department

### State and territory government

ACT Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Department of Premier and Cabinet,  
Tasmanian Government

NSW Community Relations Commission

SA Equal Opportunities Commission

Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs  
and Citizenship

### Local government and councils

City of Casey Access and Inclusion  
Committee, Vic

Local Government Association  
of Queensland

Monash City Council, Vic

Willoughby City Council, NSW

Yarra City Council, Vic

### Individuals

Atkinson, Ann

Brah, Sundeep

Broederlow, Christel

Chatterjee, Krishnendu

Chidzey, Maria Elena

Cunha, Fernanda

Di Benedetto, Renato

Enrica, Emily

Fore, Takawira

Goodwill, Michelle

Hou, Xiang-Yu (Janet) (Dr)

Hunt, Hanamenn

Ibrahim, Kadar

Jakubowicz, Andrew (Prof)

Jayasuriya, Laksiri

Kearney, Judith (Dr); Stanley, Glenda; and  
Wilkinson, Suzanne.

Le Grand, Jimaima

Lockwood-Penney, Andrew

Mamoe, Henry

Manti, Gulcan

Martin, Arthur (Rev)

McLagen, Lois

Menendez, Marta

Narayan, Sudha

Nguyen, Chau (6)

Norman, Catherine (2)

Sankaran, Ramdas

Sattar, Abdul

Sheriff Fesomola, Dauda

Shrestha, Suraj

Sun, Yiwen (2)

Tong, Tammy

Vrakas, Juliette

### **Unidentified**

Unidentified (11)

### **Confidential**

Confidential (4)

Attachment 4: Access and Equity Framework: 2006

Principle or performance indicator	Responsiveness	Communication
Strategies	<p>Extent to which programs and services are accessible, fair and responsive to the individual needs of clients</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Developing and delivering fair programs and services that are based on a sound knowledge of the needs, circumstances and cultural and other characteristics of clients and assess the direct impact on the lives of people</li><li>2. Drawing on cultural diversity to improve efficiency and effectiveness of agency programs and to support innovation and success of Australian enterprises:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• auditing and raising the profile of staff cultural skills</li><li>• providing appropriate staff training</li><li>• taking steps to recruit culturally diverse employees, volunteers, grantees, contractors</li><li>• supporting Australia's competitive business advantage arising from the diverse backgrounds, skills and networks of its workforce and population</li></ul></li><li>3. Identifying and responding quickly to emerging issues affecting particular population groups or arising from Australia's cultural diversity</li></ol>	<p>Open and effective channels of communication with all stakeholders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Providing information in a timely manner, in appropriate media, publications, formats and languages</li><li>2. Recruiting and training staff who have appropriate linguistic and cultural skills or using interpreting services to ensure effective communication with clients, as necessary</li><li>3. Consulting appropriately with diverse communities and client groups about the development of policy, legislation and regulations, the implementation of programs, and the delivery of services</li></ol>

<b>Accountability</b> Effective and transparent reporting and review mechanisms	<b>Leadership</b> Broad approaches to management of issues arising from Australia’s cultural and linguistic diversity
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establishing mechanisms to encourage feedback from people of all cultural backgrounds and allow them to register complaints and raise concerns about the performance of policy developers, program implementers and service providers (including outsourced services)</li> <li>2. Responding to concerns raised by clients to improve agencies’ performance</li> <li>3. Reporting to appropriate audiences of community concerns about agency programs and agency responses to those concerns</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaborating within and between agencies and with other partners to identify and address issues relating to cultural diversity, through publicising good practices, sharing information, coordinating programs or collaborating on projects</li> <li>2. Working with state, territory or local governments, non-government and community organisations, and contractors, raising their awareness of their responsibilities and encouraging improvement in their responses to cultural diversity</li> <li>3. Contributing to the broader goals of cultural diversity policy:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strengthening the settlement prospects of migrants</li> <li>• enhancing the ability of all to achieve self-reliance</li> <li>• encouraging social, economic and educational participation for people from diverse backgrounds</li> <li>• including issues relating to social cohesion and participation in programs and policies</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

## Attachment 5: Multicultural Access and Equity: Recommended Approach

### Multicultural Access and Equity

Respecting diversity. Improving responsiveness.



## Multicultural Access and Equity Agency Obligations



## Multicultural Access and Equity Agency Obligations

### Core elements of each Agency Multicultural Plan are to be:

#### Leadership

1. **Executive accountability:** Agency to assign a Senior Executive Officer to be responsible for implementation of Multicultural Access and Equity obligations in the agency.
2. **Agency commitment:** Agency leadership to ensure that staff understand and are committed to Multicultural Access and Equity implementation.

#### Engagement

3. **Stakeholder engagement:** Agency to have an engagement strategy to understand CALD communities' interaction with agency.
4. **Language and communication:** Agency to have a language and communication plan for CALD communities, including on the use of languages other than English and incorporating the use of interpreters and translators.

#### Performance

5. **Performance indicators and reporting:** Agency to develop a set of KPIs relating to engagement with, or outcomes of services to, CALD clients.
6. **Feedback:** Agency to have arrangements to ensure affected CALD communities are able to provide feedback on agency Multicultural Access and Equity performance.

#### Capability

7. **Cultural competency:** Agency to have training and development measures to equip staff with cultural competency skills.
8. **Research and data:** Agency to collect ethnicity data on the CALD groups with which the agency engages and to which it delivers services directly or indirectly.

#### Responsiveness

9. **Standards:** Any whole-of-government standards and guidelines developed by the agency must address Multicultural Access and Equity considerations.
10. **Policy, program and service delivery:** Provision to ensure that policies, programs, community interactions and service delivery (whether in-house or outsourced) are effective for CALD communities.
11. **Outsourced services:** Provision for incorporation of Multicultural Access and Equity requirements in funding agreements with states or third-party service deliverers.

#### Openness

12. **Publishing:** Agency to publish AMPs on agency website and performance reports against agency KPIs for CALD in agency annual reports.
13. **Data:** Agency to make CALD data available to other agencies and the public.

## Multicultural Access and Equity

### Governance and Accountability

#### Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)

- DIAC to lead the coordination of Multicultural Access and Equity with the Australian Government.
- DIAC to arrange for the biennial monitoring report to be tabled in Parliament and to Cabinet.
- DIAC to support the AMC.

#### Auditor-General

- The Auditor-General to undertake periodic performance audits of agencies' compliance with Multicultural Access and Equity obligations.

#### Australian Multicultural Council

- The Australian Multicultural Council (AMC) to consider and provide feedback on Agency Multicultural Plans.
- AMC, in conjunction with DIAC, to monitor agencies' performance.

#### Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA)

- FECCA to provide independent feedback from CALD communities on their experiences of government service delivery.

