MULTICULTURALISM AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

A national perspective

Susan Thompson
Kevin Dunn
Ian Burnley
Peter Murphy
Bronwyn Hanna

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This monograph reports findings of the first extensive survey of local councils across Australia regarding their policies and practices for addressing cultural diversity. The emphasis is on how this relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI) and non-English speaking background (NESB) people. It is the initial publication in an ongoing research project on multiculturalism and local government, which is being undertaken by academics from the Schools of Geography and the Built Environment at The University of New South Wales.

The focus of the research is a primary analysis of the responses to a multi-faceted questionnaire which was sent to all 750 councils in Australia, and which evoked a near 50 per cent response rate. Council annual reports and policy statements were also analysed. The survey findings are contextualised by a literature review on the development of the "Multicultural Project" in Australia, and a geographic analysis of recently released demographic data from the 1996 Census.

The study examines the incorporation of multiculturalism at the local government level in relation to four policy areas:

- Symbolic representation, local identity and citizenship
- Equitable access to services and decision making processes
- Inter-communal relations and ethnic intolerance
- Facilitation of cultural expression

While noting deficiencies and problems, this monograph also demonstrates many examples of innovative policy and "best practice" at the local government level.

In **Chapter One (Introduction)** we differentiate the types of ways in which local government is grappling with the incorporation of multicultural policies as a means of addressing cultural diversity. Action by this tier of government, popularly perceived as the "closest to the people", is increasingly imperative. This is particularly so because of the institutional shifts at state and federal levels of government away from assimilationist assumptions associated with the "White Australia Policy" and towards an understanding of the Australian citizenry as diverse. Continued progress in this area may have been hampered recently by public expressions of hostility towards multiculturalism, associated with the rhetoric of the One Nation party. This study critically assesses and promotes the widespread achievements by local government in advancing multicultural policy.

Chapter Two (A review of multicultural policy in Australia) offers a detailed overview of the development of the "Multicultural Project" in Australia since the 1970s. There is an emphasis on landmark federal and NSW state policy statements and institutions, particularly those which have had

important ramifications for local government. These include the *Galbally Report* (1978), the *Jupp Report* (1986), The *National Agenda* statement (1989), *Creative Nation* (1994) and in NSW, the Local Ethnic Affairs Policy Statement Program (from 1985).

In **Chapter Three (Geographies of Diversity)** we examine data from the 1996 Census to gain an understanding of patterns of national cultural diversity. Our research reveals that demographic diversity is widespread. There are few regions in Australia which have insignificant representations of migrant or indigenous communities. The major urban areas have the largest non-English speaking background (NESB) immigrant populations in both a proportional and an absolute sense, with *every* local government area in metropolitan Sydney and Melbourne having a significant level of cultural diversity. Rural areas do have lower levels of cultural diversity. However, in all but a few extremely remote and small local government areas (LGAs) persons of a NESB are present. Furthermore, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are located throughout rural and remote Australia. Given such profound and widespread levels of cultural diversity, local government is compelled to institute a systematic response to the needs of different groups.

Chapter Four (Access and Equity) explores the issue of accessible and equitable service provision. We present information on councils' policies and practices which aim to ensure that every citizen knows about locally available services and facilities, as well as being able to use them. Our questionnaire asked councils if they used interpreting and translation services, whether specific groups are targeted to help them access services, the different ways in which information is disseminated to culturally diverse groups, and the success of access and equity (A&E) programs currently being implemented. We also examined employment practices in relation to council officers' understanding and use of A&E policies and programs. Throughout the Chapter we provide examples of best practice.

Examples of best practice are also detailed in **Chapter Five (Intercommunal relations and cultural expression)**. Awareness and knowledge of local cultural diversity (focusing on non-Anglo and indigenous cultures), experiences and responses to inter-communal and ethnic discord, major community relations initiatives, and different modes of cultural expression are discussed. We found that councils reported a very positive self assessment of the cultural sensitivity of their service provision, although their knowledge of community relations policies is poor. The Chapter concludes by recommending much greater guidance for local government regarding its roles and responsibilities for local inter-communal relations.

In **Chapter Six (Constraints on local government)** we examine the impediments currently facing local government which restrict the implementation of multicultural policies. We identify the following constraints: the legislative framework of local government (both restrictive and coercive) largely using the example of NSW; organisational concerns, noting debates around the recent

expansion of human service provision in local government; financial constraints, describing first the restrictions on revenue collection for local government, and second the difficulties experienced by councils with lower income rate payers typically combined with greater social needs; and finally, political/attitudinal concerns. The Chapter stresses that many survey respondents complained of ever increasing expectations in a context of diminishing resources.

Chapter Seven (Representations of local citizenship) outlines our argument that some councils could be more inclusive of ATSI and NESB people as citizens in local governance. We highlight problematic representations and practices which emerged from responses to the questionnaire, and our analysis of council reports and policies. Discussion focuses on tendencies to represent certain groups as "them" versus "us"; common means of resistance to acknowledging the extent of local diversity; and examples of council structures and programs which could better address cultural diversity.

Chapter Eight (Conclusion) brings the monograph to a close. We provide a comprehensive series of recommendations which will help local government in Australia better serve its culturally diverse communities.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A&E	Access and Equity
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACMA	Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs
ACPEA	Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs (Federal)
ADB	Anti-Discrimination Board
AEAC	Australian Ethnic Affairs Council (Federal)
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association (Federal)
APIRP	Australian Population and Immigration Research Program
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CRA	Community Relations Agenda
CRMMPS	Committee of Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs (*Jupp Report*)
CRS	Community Relations Strategy (Federal)
DCA	Department of Communications and the Arts (Federal)
EAC NSW	Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW
EAPS	Ethnic Affairs Policy Statements (NSW)
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
GiA	Grant-in Aid
HRCA	Human Rights Commission of Australia
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Federal)
HRSCATSIA	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
HRSCCA	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs
LEAPS	Local Ethnic Affairs Policy Statements (NSW)
LGA	Local Government Area
LGSA	Local Government and Shires Association (NSW)
LOTE	Language Other Than English
MRC	Multicultural Resource Centres
NES	Non English Speaking
NESB	Non English Speaking Background
NESC	Non English Speaking Country
NMAC	National Multicultural Advisory Council (Federal)
NSW	New South Wales
NUD.IST	Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising (qualitative research analysis software)
OMA	Office of Multicultural Affairs (Federal)
QLD	Queensland
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Federal)
RMSP	Review of Migrant Sevices and Programs (*Galbally Report*)
SA	South Australia
SALGA	South Australian Local Government Association
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SLA	Statistical Local Area
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TAS	Tasmania
VIC	Victoria
VROC	Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils
WA	Western Australia

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

A critical evaluation of local government's response to cultural diversity in Australia is long overdue. Institutional restructuring is an essential part of reorganising governance and reconsidering citizenship in a multicultural society (Sandercock, 1998; Young, 1990). In countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom and Sweden there have been recent calls for local and metropolitan governments to better cater to their diverse constituencies (Khakee and Thomas, 1995; Qadeer, 1994). In Australia, however, responses by the tier of government that is "closest to the people" remain poorly understood. Our research project addresses that empirical gap and is the first comprehensive national assessment of multiculturalism in local government.

Lost opportunities

Governmental institutions in Australia are still coming to terms with cultural plurality, as our survey revealed. Many of the community plans, social plans and Local Ethnic Affairs Policy Statements (LEAPS) documents sent to us were the first ever produced by councils, and many were stamped as "draft" versions. The response to cultural diversity at the local level will be an ongoing process, continuing into the next century.

Councils around Australia have developed creative programs and policies to deal with and celebrate local cultural diversity. Unfortunately these are often "lost". In the access and equity (A&E) policy arena this "loss" tends to happen when the project worker's contract expires, or when an ethnic liaison or LEAPS officer is internally transferred to another department of the local council (Blackwell, 1994, 61). An overall finding from our survey is that each council seems to be re-inventing the wheel for themselves. There has been too little sharing of information and strategies between councils. This represents a drain on limited resources and works against the aim of effecting lasting institutional transformation.

A world leader?

The President of the United States, Bill Clinton, suggested that Sydney was a fine example of a place where cultural difference is accommodated without forced assimilation or segregation.

> When you drive down the streets of Sydney tonight and you look at all these different people making a contribution to your country, think with sadness, but prayerful hope about all the people who live around the world who are still being persecuted because they are different from their neighbours, because they have different religious views or they're from different ... ethnic or tribal groups... And I cannot think of a better place in the entire world, a more shining example of how people can come together as one nation and one community than Sydney, Australia (Clinton speech, 21 Nov 1996, Royal Botanical Gardens, Sydney).

This statement is a remarkable compliment and represents a strong voice of support for those who advocate multiculturalism. A world leader has stated that Australia was a "world leader" in dealing with cultural diversity. Findings on how Australia has dealt with diversity at the local government level will be of international interest.

A diverse heritage and future

As we demonstrate in Chapter Three, Australia possesses a culturally diverse present and future. This diversity is inescapable. What has often been neglected is Australia's diverse past. In recent times, the immense variety of indigenous and immigrant cultures has been "unearthed". Our focus on recent responses to diversity is by no means a denial of the cultural plurality which predates the post World War II immigration programs. Chapter Five includes an assessment on how well councils have celebrated local cultural heritages, and how well physical culture and sites are managed.

This study is also cognisant of the diversity which comes from differences of gender, sexuality, socio-economic status and (dis)ability. Nonetheless, it is local government's engagement with ethnic plurality, including evaluations of relations between councils and local indigenous communities, which is the main focus of this study. Although there are dangers in dealing with "multicultural issues" and "indigenous issues" together, it is not our intention to conflate them. We bring them together because they both concern local cultural diversity and demonstrate in different ways how local government is responding.

Citizens not victims

Recent government reports, as well as critics of multiculturalism, have taken issue with the assumption that a person of non-English speaking background (NESB) is necessarily disadvantaged (HRSCCA 1996, 106-12; MacGregor 1997, 44-5). There are dangers in any generalisation which portrays all migrants from non-English speaking countries as needy or as "problems". For these reasons some researchers have ceased using "NESB" as indicating a group of people who are likely to face barriers to services and participation. However, the term is used here because, at the time of our survey, NESB was widely accepted by researchers, policy makers, government agencies and local government officers.

Nonetheless, it is important not to disempower people and groups through portrayals which constantly cast them as passive and hopeless victims. Fincher (1998, 39, 42-3) has argued that researchers need to "re-construct migrants". Rather than viewing migrants as the bearers of problems they should instead be seen as "anticipated participants", "neglected creative capital" or "cultural bridge builders" (Sassen, 1996). It is too easy and far too common for "cultural minorities" to be represented as passive and powerless. This is not to suggest that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) and NESB people do not face barriers to service provision and entitlements. Clearly, some Australians constantly have their citizenship challenged because of their cultural difference from a presumed "mainstream".

Governing culture

Australian migrant entry and settlement policy, and the official construction of national identity, have shifted from a "White Australia" identity and practice, associated with assimilationism, to the present model of multiculturalism (Cope et al. 1991, 3-19; Fincher 1997, 218-223). The "White Australia" policy on immigration was only officially abolished in 1974. For most of the last two hundred years immigration policies have been based upon a principle of correspondence or acculturation to an Anglo, sometimes Anglo-Celtic "mainstream". Over the last two decades there has been an attempt to dismantle the White Australia and assimilation policies. The embrace of multiculturalism has reorientated national identity and led to a restructuring of government policies and practices.

But what is meant by multiculturalism? Multiculturalism is understood here to mean two things. Firstly, it refers to demographic circumstance. Australian multiculturalism is the plural and dynamic mix of home-grown and imported cultures which circulate, integrate and develop within this country (this is demonstrated in Chapter Three). Secondly, multiculturalism refers to policy and governance: the official portrayals of national identity, and the progressive attempts to transform service institutions in order to embrace cultural difference in Australia.

In 1989, the Keating Federal Government launched a central and defining statement on the identity of Australia and on how public institutions should deal with cultural difference (see Chapter Two). The social policy of multiculturalism was officially proclaimed in the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia ... Sharing Our Future* (OMA, 1989). The *Agenda* statement asserted that the national identity should be a multicultural identity, a dynamic and flexible encapsulation (OMA, 1989, 2). The Federal Government defined multicultural policy as having three broad dimensions: the right to retain cultural identity and to express it; the right to social justice and equal opportunity; and the need to fully utilise the economic potential and abilities of all Australians (OMA, 1989, vii). The *National Agenda* statement also imposed limits to Australian multiculturalism. It demanded from all Australians an over-riding commitment to the nation, the acceptance of the basic structures and principles of Australian society (law, respect for freedom of speech and religion, democracy and equality of the sexes) and acceptance of the right of others to express their culture and views (OMA, 1989, vii).

The official adoption of multiculturalism at the federal level has sanctioned further institutional and service provider responses at all levels of government. Our interest in the institutionalisation of multiculturalism falls into four broad categories:
- **Symbolic representation**. Changes to the official enunciations of national and local identity. Local, regional or national portrayals which are definitionally diverse. Vision statements and other official proclamations of identity to represent their diverse constituencies.
- **Access to services**. The provision of services in an equitable fashion. The ability of all citizens to participate in local decision making, program formulation, review and planning.

- **Inter-communal relations**. Interest and intervention in inter-communal relations. Detecting and responding to inter-communal problems, such as inter-ethnic discord, attitudinal intolerance, institutional racism, problematic media reporting and community images.
- **Expression**. The cultivation of all cultures. The facilitation of diverse cultural practices and expression. The protection of heritage and sites of cultural significance.

Symbolic issues of identity and representation are fundamentally linked to material issues of empowerment, access to entitlements and protection from oppressions. There is now a well established literature in which this nexus has been demonstrated (Imrie *et al.*, 1996; Koffman and England, 1997; Painter and Philo, 1995; Smith and Thrift, 1990). The link between the "symbolic" and the "material" pertains at all scales: national, state and local. This study is an assessment of local cultural governance.

Defending multiculturalism

Throughout the last two decades there have been a host of critics of multicultural policy and even of Australia's multicultural composition. The election of the Howard Coalition Government in March of 1996 may have threatened the official embrace of cultural difference (McLeay, 1997). Since attaining office the rhetoric of the Coalition Government has been centred around binary oppositions such as cohesion versus divisiveness, and national interest versus vested interests. There has been much reference to a "disillusioned mainstream" whose history and institutions have been "demeaned" (Howard, 1995, 11, 14; 1996, 2-3). In the current Prime Minister's *Fourth Headland Speech* there was constant reference to the previous Government's so-called politics of division (Howard, 1995, 5, 17, 43):

> Australians want an end to divisiveness... A Coalition Government's commitment to restore a cohesiveness in Australian society is founded on its commitment to govern in the national interest and not for vested interests (Howard, 1995, 43).

A National Multicultural Advisory Council (NMAC) has recently been instituted to review of multicultural policy (NMAC 1997, 14; see Chapter Two). The risk is that governance which is sensitive to cultural difference will be seen as equal to cultural division. Ethno-specific service provision has been portrayed as "special treatment", and vilification legislation dismissed as a project of "political correctness". Both of these themes - reverse racism and political correctness - were picked up by the Federal Member for Oxley in the purposefully inflammatory speech to the House of Representatives which initiated an on-going "race debate". The recognition and maintenance of cultural difference was criticised as "separatism" (Hanson, 1996, 3860-3861).

> I and most Australians want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished... A truly multicultural country can never be strong or united. The world is full of failed and tragic examples, ranging from Ireland to Bosnia to Africa and, closer to home, Papua New Guinea. America and Great Britain are currently paying the price...

Abolishing the policy of multiculturalism will save billions of dollars and allow those from ethnic backgrounds to join mainstream Australia, paving the way to a strong, united country (Hanson, 1996, 3862).

The citizenship of indigenous and Asian-Australians has been publicly questioned in this "race debate". Some opinion polls have reported disturbing levels of community support for these views. Multicultural identity, programs and planning have been publicly questioned. Once again, as in 1984 and 1988, multiculturalism must be explained, justified and advocated. Our research aims to contribute to that defence by putting the case for multiculturalism in local government.

Aims and outline of the project

The general aim of our research has been to evaluate the responsiveness of local government to cultural diversity. Local councils across Australia were surveyed regarding the types of programs they had implemented for dealing with multicultural constituencies. We were also interested in seeing how different programs were implemented across the whole of council. Specifically, we had five general aims:

1 To assess the extent of diversity. How culturally diverse are local government areas (LGAs) across Australia? In Chapter Three we outline 1996 census findings on diversity at the local government level. With the entry of new and recent migrant groups, especially since the end of the White Australia Policy, the scope and scale of diversity has rapidly expanded in urban areas. But diversity also exists outside of urban Australia, with various indigenous language groups and nations, and an array of longer established cultural groups principally from European countries.

2 How well are councils providing accessible and equitable services for all the constituents in their community? What are the benefits of A&E policies and practices for councils and their communities? What opportunities exist for NESB and ATSI Australians to participate in service program and policy design? Our findings on access to and participation in the design of service provision are outlined in Chapter Four.

3 What actions do councils take with regard to local community relations? Do they celebrate cultural diversity and protect physical cultural heritage? How do they deal with difficulties such as attitudinal racism and locally specific outbreaks of intolerance? In what ways are councils being creative and innovative? Our findings on council interventions with local inter-communal relations are detailed in Chapter Five.

4 What are the limitations faced by local government? What are the legislative, organisational, financial, political and attitudinal blocks which make it difficult for councils

to formulate and implement multicultural policy? These constraints, as described in academic research as well as reported to us by councils, are outlined in Chapter Six.

5 How is local citizenship understood? How do councils recognise citizenship in a multicultural community? How inclusive are council portrayals of their community? How successfully is local government incorporating all constituents as local citizens? Chapter Seven explores these questions.

Method

The main data gathering strategy adopted in our research was a comprehensive questionnaire survey of local government in all the states of Australia. We also sought council documents on multicultural and indigenous policy, and we conducted a statistical analysis of recent migration and settlement trends.

The national survey was comprised of five questionnaires (see Appendix for a sample of the questionnaire). A survey form was sent to each of the following key personnel:

- General Manager
- Head of Community Services
- Head of Town Planning
- Head of Engineering and Technical Services
- Head of Health

Although there were some common questions, we devised a separate questionnaire for each of the council departments targeted. We wanted to find out what different departments were doing, as well as gain an overview of the "whole of council" approach from General Managers.

One difficulty we faced was finding technical and policy jargon applicable across Australia. We endeavoured to use generic terms as much as possible and were guided by the consultations we undertook prior to posting the questionnaires. To assist us with the wording and setting out, we consulted with appropriate officers in the Local Government and Shires Associations, the Department of Local Government, Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research. Following these initial consultations, we pilot-tested the questionnaire with several councils to detect ambiguous or confusing questions.

In early October 1996, the five-part questionnaire was sent to all 750 local councils then existent in the five states and the Northern Territory, as listed by the Local Government and Shires Association (LGSA). The Australian Capital Territory was not included because it has no institutions of local government. The response rate from the Northern Territory was very low, and we realised that the survey made assumptions which were inappropriate to many local government contexts there. Accordingly, we decided to exclude the Northern Territory results. This, combined with the fact that

several councils amalgamated in the course of the research, means that the final number of councils approached across Australia was 666 instead of 750. This experience highlights some of the difficulties of constructing a national survey of this kind.

To improve the response rate, three follow-up letters urging councils to complete the survey were sent. We also actively pursued councils in NSW, Queensland and Victoria which had a reputation for innovative practice in dealing with local cultural diversity. The final reminder notice was sent in early February of 1997. The questionnaires contained a variety of fixed and open response options. The survey generated extensive data sets, both qualitative and quantitative.

In the covering letter which accompanied the questionnaire, councils were also asked to send us any relevant documentation on multicultural and indigenous policies. A wealth of material was received from a variety of urban and rural councils. These included annual reports, Local Ethnic Affairs Policy Statements (LEAPS), community relations strategies, social plans, mission statements and other documents. We assured respondents of confidentiality, and accordingly specific councils are not identified in this monograph when quoting survey responses, but only when quoting published reports, plans or policies.

Response rates

Just under 50 per cent of councils surveyed completed and returned at least one of the questionnaires. Twenty-five per cent of all councils returned the full set of questionnaires. On a state-by-state basis, the response rate varied, with NSW having the highest in all categories. This may reflect the fact that the questionnaire was considered more relevant and appropriate for this state. Despite our best intentions, much of the questionnaire wording and reference to policy frameworks were from eastern-Australia. In relation to response rates from the different departments of council, a fairly consistent rate was achieved. Most localities which did not return any completed surveys were areas with "low" levels of persons born in a non-English speaking country (NESC) (Table 1.1). There was also a lesser response rate from very small councils. Indeed, we received many letters from such councils, sometimes about to undergo amalgamation, apologising for not having the staff or the departmental structures to complete the survey forms. This low response from small councils and from those with few residents born in a NESC lessened our overall response rates. However, our aim was to provide all councils with an opportunity to participate, notwithstanding the negative effect that this decision might have on our final response rate. Nonetheless, the overall response rates are impressive, especially in light of the above limitations and the length and detail of the questionnaire. We would like to extend our thanks to local government officers throughout the states of Australia for taking precious time and effort to assist this research by responding to the questionnaire.

Data analysis

All data entry and processing was carried out in-house at the University of NSW. The open-ended (qualitative) responses were introduced into the NUD.IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing

Searching and Theorising) program which is widely used as an effective management tool for qualitative data. An Index Tree (coding regime) was developed to code these data. The use of NUD.IST allowed us to attribute multiple codes to open responses. These codes were then used to index and retrieve the data by theme. Themes, for example, included council initiatives regarding inter-ethnic relations, council assisted cultural festivals and services for specific ethnic groups. Results of the analyses of the qualitative data are found in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

The documentary reports sent by councils which referred to multiculturalism, indigenous issues and ethnic diversity were summarised and used as a resource in all chapters, especially Chapter Seven.

Closed-response (quantitative) data was coded and analysed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and spreadsheet programs. In the first instance, frequencies were calculated for each response. Secondly, some basic cross-tabulations were generated, for example, production of A&E plans by state and budgets for interpreting services by type of department. The results of these analyses are found principally in Chapters Four and Five.

We used the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1996 Census to obtain demographic data on birthplace and language groups for LGAs throughout Australia. Birthplace and language data counts were adjusted for census underenumeration and the overseas visitor category was removed from general totals prior to secondary data analysis. In order to match survey and census data, the spatial definition of LGAs as defined by the Australian Standard Geographic Classification was used.

Local government in Australia is responding to cultural diversity in a variety of ways. This monograph reports findings of the first national assessment of multicultural policy development and practice in local government. By sharing the many creative approaches currently being developed in local government across Australia, we aim to applaud and assist those councils already committed to instituting policies for addressing cultural diversity. We also hope to inspire other councils still struggling to incorporate multiculturalism by offering rationales as well as examples of locally developed modes of responding to and celebrating local cultural diversity.

Table 1.1   Response rates to the survey by LGAs according to the proportion of population born in (mainly) NES Countries, by state.

Returned at least one response to survey	Number of LGAs with						Total
	0-3 Per cent NESC	3-9 Per cent NESC	10-19 Per cent NESC	20-34 Per cent NESC	35-49 Per cent NESC	50+ Per cent NESC	
New South Wales							
Yes	47	37	16	14	5	1	120
No	39	13	1	2	2	0	56
Total	86	50	17	16	7	1	177
Per cent which responded	**54.7**	**74.0**	**94.1**	**87.5**	**71.4**	**100.0**	**67.8**
Victoria							
Yes	5	19	7	8	2	0	39
No	14	14	3	5	1	0	37
Total	19	33	10	13	3	0	78
Per cent which responded	**26.3**	**57.6**	**70.0**	**61.5**	**66.7**	**0.0**	**50.0**
Queensland							
Yes	16	27	2	0	0	0	49
No	52	27	1	0	0	0	80
Total	68	54	3	0	0	0	125
Per cent which responded	**23.5**	**50.0**	**66.7**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**39.2**
South Australia							
Yes	17	20	8	4	0	0	49
No	30	28	7	2	0	0	64
Total	47	48	15	6	0	0	116
Per cent which responded	**36.2**	**41.7**	**53.3**	**66.7**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**42.2**
Western Australia							
Yes	12	26	13	2	0	0	53
No	37	42	7	2	0	0	88
Total	49	68	20	4	0	0	141
Per cent which responded	**24.5**	**38.2**	**65.0**	**50.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**37.6**
Tasmania							
Yes	12	6	0	0	0	0	18
No	8	3	0	0	0	0	11
Total	20	9	0	0	0	0	29
Per cent which responded	**60.0**	**66.7**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**62.1**
All states							
Yes	109	135	46	28	7	1	326
No	180	127	19	11	3	0	340
Total	289	262	65	39	10	1	666
Per cent which responded	**40.1**	**51.5**	**70.8**	**71.8**	**70.0**	**100.0**	**48.9**

Source: ABS Census, 1996. Customised tables and 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism

Chapter Two

A REVIEW OF MULTICULTURAL POLICY IN AUSTRALIA

Australia and Australians have always been culturally diverse. The extent and mix of that diversity has been enhanced since the Second World War. The result has been a circumstance of profound multicultural composition (see Chapter Three). Over the last three decades there has been an emancipatory project to transform civil and civic institutions in order that full citizenship was extended to all Australians. What we might call the "Multicultural Project" has had differing degrees and rates of success. Changes in governance were required, which included access to government services to prevent marginalisation, positive constructions of identity to fight cultural imperialism, legal sanctions against discrimination, and state protection from violence and other hate crimes. Institutions identified as requiring change included social services, the media, schools, police and local government. In this chapter we chart the development of the Multicultural Project, specifically relating it to local governance. The development of multicultural policy in Australia is discussed here within the four broad categories identified in Chapter One as motivating this study: symbolic representation, access to services, inter-communal relations, and cultural expression.

Multicultural policy can never be regarded as a short term "fix", or as a transition remedy. In order to meet the aim of expanding citizenship and entrenching inclusiveness multiculturalism must be seen as a "permanent policy requiring continued resources and innovation" (Jupp, 1996, 22).

Symbolic representation

The portrayal of nationhood, and also of locality, is a fundamental symbolic construction which regulates the dispensation of citizenship, including access to government services, and protections offered by the state. Official constructions of nationhood should emphasise that national identity is diverse and open to re-assessment. The political geographer Jan Penrose has asserted that national identity should "reflect heterogeneity and fluidity" (1993, 46) rather than uniformity. Proclamations of multicultural nationhood in Australia have often made overt reference to how diverse symbolic representations would provide a structure upon which to expand citizenship (DCA, 1994, 1,6,9; OMA, 1989, 6). Clearly, conceptions of nation or locality must be flexible enough to embrace the cultural diversity of their constituency. It therefore follows that a fundamental and necessary first step in Australia's Multicultural Project was the creation of a heterogeneous national identity.

In 1973, the Labor Government Minister for Immigration, published *A Multi-Cultural Society for the Future* (Grassby, 1973). This statement recognised Australia's ethnic heterogeneity. It suggested a model of cultural pluralism within a "family of the nation" (Grassby, 1973, 4). Later, and under the influence of Jerzy Zubrzycki, the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council (AEAC) developed a model of cultural pluralism based upon the three principles of social cohesion, cultural identity, and equality of opportunity and access (AEAC, 1977, 16). Later, the Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs (ACPEA) extended Grassby's analogy between "family and nation" to "locality and nation" in

Multiculturalism for All Australians: Our Developing Neighbourhood (ACPEA,1982). These were useful symbolic models for advocating that cultural difference, in this case between family members or within a neighbourhood, could easily be accommodated within an identifiable whole. The ACPEA also added a fourth principle: that of primary loyalty to, commitment to and participation in, Australian society. These early reports and federal government policies were the foundations of a significant change in the official construction of national identity. They provided the core principles of multicultural policy for the next two decades.

The shift to a multicultural national identity and policy has been debated and vigorously contested. In 1984, there was a national debate (remembered as the "Blainey debate", Lewins, 1987) on the worthiness of multiculturalism as a model for Australian society. This debate initiated a government investigation, numerous reports, and the implementation of new policies and programs. The report of the Committee of Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs (CRMMPS) refuted the Blainey critiques and confirmed multiculturalism as the most sound ideal for Australian governance Services (CRMMPS, 1986, known as the *Jupp Report*). However, the Australian character and make-up became a partisan political issue again during 1988, when the Liberal Federal Opposition Leader criticised levels of "Asian" immigration and aspects of multicultural policy (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1/8/88 and 20/8/88). In response, the Federal Government's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs (ACMA) released a discussion paper on multicultural identity and policy (ACMA, 1988). Following this came the central and defining federal government statement on the identity of Australia and on how public institutions should deal with cultural difference (OMA, 1989). The social policy of multiculturalism, was officially proclaimed in the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia ... Sharing Our Future*, often referred to as the *National Agenda* statement. It asserted that Australia should be defined as a multicultural nation, and that the national identity should be dynamic and flexible. The *National Agenda* also restated the core principles of multicultural policy, which we outlined in Chapter One (OMA, 1989, 52).

Much of the discussion about cultural diversity, immigration, settlement policy and ethnic relations has tended to "wittingly or unwittingly exclude Aborigines" (Jordan, 1986, 25). Alternatively, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI) have been concerned that including indigenous people in definitions of multiculturalism reduces them to "just another ethnic group", rather than Australians with a "unique history and culture" (Jordan, 1986, 26). Morrissey and Mitchell found this concern was a "widely held point of view among indigenous people" (1993, 111). Multicultural policy had paid scant attention to the needs and cultural diversity of indigenous people, and as a result ATSI people have tended to be suspicious of the Multicultural Project. Much of what has been called multicultural policy has done little to expand citizenship for indigenous Australia.

In the Federal Government's 1994 cultural policy statement, *Creative Nation* (DCA, 1994), particular importance was afforded to Australia's indigenous peoples, securing for them a specific contribution to national identity. This statement posited Australia as a "hybrid" nation composed of the mixing of

"imported and home-grown cultures" (DCA, 1994, 1,6). The Prime Minister, quoting from the statement, asserted that:

> What is "distinctly Australia" is what we create out of that unique combination of factors that derives from our inheritance, our environment and our position in the world. This includes an indigenous culture, both ancient and continuing; a British cultural legacy (imprinted through language, the law and our institutions); the diverse inheritances of immigrant groups; the distinct experiences of class and region and the impact of place. We are genuinely and distinctly "multi-cultural" with meanings that extend beyond ethnic diversity (DCA, 1994, 9).

This represents the most inclusive and complex government statement of Australian national identity ever articulated. Indeed, this enunciation of national identity as dynamic and heterogenous is globally and historically remarkable.

In 1994, the Federal Government announced a focus upon the dealings of specific institutions with various cultural groups, including the media, police and local government (OMA, 1994a, 4). Media representations of different ethnic groups had been stressed as a central concern in the *National Agenda* statement:

> Australia's cultural diversity needs to be reflected in the mass media and cultural institutions... The image of Australia portrayed on commercial television, for example, is overwhelmingly one of cultural homogeneity, coloured by occasionally engaging but nonetheless simplistic stereotypes (OMA, 1989, 46).

It was also felt that relations between ethnic groups were not assisted by "sensationalist reporting" (OMA, 1989, 46). An Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW (EAC NSW) report on clashes between youth in Western Sydney found that the media played a pronounced role in sensationalising and exacerbating problems (EAC NSW, 1986, 3-4). This was seen as typical of what the EAC NSW described as "overreaction by the media to an otherwise mundane event" (EAC NSW, 1994, 34). In NSW the majority of racial vilification complaints are made against media organisations. The EAC NSW complained that:

> The media images of ethnic communities are so constant that they have become caricatures in themselves; Italian marijuana growers, Chinese gamblers and drug dealers, Pacific Islander youths stealing designer casual shoe wear, Greeks frauding the Social Security system... the media should be targeted to review current practices with particular regard to the provisions of the Racial Vilification Amendments (EAC NSW, 1992, 36-7).

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) concluded that the pervasive experience of racism suffer by indigenous Australians could be traced in part to the popular (mis)understandings of Aboriginality. In general, non-Aboriginal Australians have a very poor understanding of the dispossession, oppression and resistance of the Aborigines (RCIADIC, 1991a, 7).

Aboriginal people lack access to the mainstream media and when they are represented they are portrayed in a stereotypical, sensational and often derogatory manner (RCIADIC, 1991b,184-7). As part of the 1991 Community Relations Strategy (CRS), the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) liaised with the Department of Transport and Communications and produced voluntary guidelines for the portrayal of Australia's cultural diversity (OMA, 1991b, 23). Another major project initiated as part of the CRS was an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) co-ordinated grant for indigenous media or community groups to monitor mainstream media and prepare responses to biased and offensive reporting (OMA, 1991b, 25). The *Creative Nation* cultural policy included additional funding for a Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) public television channel, as well as financial incentives for the production and broadcast on commercial television of a broader portrayal of cultural diversity in Australia (DCA, 1994, 12, 46-9).

The irrepressible and beneficial nature of cultural diversity must also be embraced in articulations of locality or community. Dynamic and diverse representations of community are critical. To not "figure" in the identity of your locality or country, is to lack an important symbolic representation. Not being represented in the encapsulation of your place detracts from your local citizenship. If you are not a citizen your rights of access and entitlements from the local state are weakened. The definition of locality or local community must also be definitionally diverse. There has been some official recognition of this need in Australia. The 1995 *Commonwealth-Local Government Accord* (Commonwealth Government and Australian Local Government Association, 1995) recognised the crucial role that local government must play in recognising the benefits of cultural diversity, expanding citizenship, maintaining community cohesion, and pursuing social justice and reconciliation. The House of Representative Standing Committee of Community Affairs (HRSCCA) (1996, 34-5) recommended that local government be assisted to recognise local cultural diversity and to integrate such an awareness into all strategic and corporate policy. The NSW *Local Government Act, 1993* legislates for councils' functions in NSW to be consistent with and actively promote principles of cultural diversity. As we outline in the following section, this has involved preparing reports on the breadth of resident access to service provision and participation in decision making.

As mentioned in Chapter One there has developed some official ambivalence, certainly at the federal government level, to the continued embrace of multiculturalism. In response to critiques of multiculturalism, and to evidence of unease among some sections of the public, the Howard Coalition Government has initiated a review of multiculturalism (NMAC, 1997, 5, 9-10). A new Advisory Council was formed and tasked to revisit the very foundations of multicultural policy. The Council was briefed to question the principles enunciated in the *National Agenda* statement, to decide whether the term "multiculturalism" remained appropriate, and to determine what the core values of Australian society should be (NMAC, 1997, 12-3). The Advisory Council's terms of reference included the requirement that all subsequent recommendations be consistent with Government directions and priorities. These were detailed as:

- a society united by common, values, goals and aspirations
- the advancement of the interests of the wider community, and hence the national interest, as distinct from the special interests of sectional groups
- to reaffirm the strength of the unifying values that Australians share (NMAC, 1997, 14).

At face value these principles seem laudable. However, they can be seen to be part of the rhetoric for assimilation policy and for politics which exclude those who are marked as culturally different from a presumed "mainstream". There is also an implied suggestion in the Government directions that multiculturalism has been about servicing the "special interests of sectional groups" at the expense of a "wider" or "majority community". No evidence for such "special treatment" is provided, nor is the "majority community" ever defined, so it is difficult to engage with this implication. The new Advisory Council will report its recommendations to the Federal Government in late 1998.

Access to services

This area access and equity (A&E) multicultural policy relates to the equitable provision of services and to the ability of all citizens to participate in local decision making, program formulation, review and planning. Debates and reports on service provision and cultural diversity often make a three-way distinction amongst service types:

- on-arrival services
- ethno-specific services
- mainstream services (Cox, 1996, 40-6).

"On-arrival" services are a limited and decreasing range of federally funded programs such as counselling, migrant job search, and English language provision (Cox, 1996, 40-2). There has been significant debate regarding the relative virtues and efficiencies of the latter services.

The best example of an "ethno-specific service" has been the federal government funding of Grant-in-Aid (GiA) workers who were employed by specific cultural associations to assist members of that cultural group. Broadening migrants access to "mainstream services has principally been pursued through the access and equity (A&E) program which has the aim of making everyday institutions and policies more accessible to those who face linguistic barriers or other forms of cultural difficulty. In report after report most governments and advisory committees have expressed a preference for "mainstream services". However, the slow rate of mainstreaming, and communities' reliance upon GiA workers, has meant that ethno-specific services have persisted. It was only in the mid-1990s, that this area of policy began to seriously consider indigenous Australian's access to government services. This partly explains why much of the language of access and participation to government services has a migrant or non-English speaking background (NESB) focus.

In 1977, the AEAC stressed that "equal access to the rights and opportunities that society provides" was a key principle for a multicultural society (1977, 16). Reflecting this, the report of the Review of

Migrant Services and Programs (RMSP) made a landmark statement on the provision of migrant services (RMSP, 1978 known as the *Galbally Report*). The *Galbally Report* demanded a more systematic and flexible framework and established four guiding principles:

- equal opportunity and access to services;
- maintenance of cultural heritage;
- modified mainstream services with ethno-specific programs where necessary; and
- client consultation and community self-help (1978, 4).

Many of the most significant institutional developments in the Multicultural Project were Fraser Government adoptions of *Galbally Report* recommendations. These included SBS Television, the establishment and support for Multicultural Resource Centres (MRCs), a doubling of funding for GiA workers, and the extension of SBS radio, language tuition and translation services. The *Galbally Report* favoured culturally-sensitive and culturally-flexible mainstream services over ethno-specific service provision (1978, 5). However, it also found that in certain circumstances ethno-specific services such as GiA workers were the most efficient and cost-effective method of migrant welfare provision, although it was assumed that such services could eventually be phased out.

The Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs (ACPEA) later confirmed mainstreaming as the desired model, preferring "the use of mainstream services by minority groups, wherever practicable, rather than the creation of a separate network of services" (1982, 24). The problems with ethno-specific services were by then apparent and included poorly qualified and isolated staff coping with huge workloads. They were often torn between conflicting community demands and suffered short term appointments and little by way of a career structure (Cox, 1996, 45). It was becoming clear that the extent of diversity in Australia mitigated against the provision of specific services to all cultural groups, the most needy of whom were newly arrived migrants without the organisational ability necessary to seek funding for a GiA worker (Jupp *et al*., 1991, 31). More fundamentally, the provision of ethno-specific services "almost certainly allowed mainstream agencies to avoid adapting to the realities of a culturally diverse society for many years" (Cox, 1996, 49). The future of service provision in a culturally diverse society had to be flexible mainstream programs.

In 1985, the National Population Council defined A&E as referring to equity of opportunity to apply for services, entitlements and benefits (NPC, 1985). The *Jupp Report* on migrant and multicultural programs recommended the establishment of an Office of Ethnic Affairs to oversee the implementation of an "Access and Equity Strategy" based on this understanding of A&E (CRMMPS, 1986). In response to this recommendation the Hawke Labor Government established an Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) within the powerful Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The OMA had responsibility for co-ordinating the inculcation of A&E principles throughout the federal bureaucracy. In NSW, and some of the other states, the EAC was given this monitoring role.

By the end of the 1980s, the Strategy also included a focus upon barriers, be they structural or policy limitations, that impeded universal A&E (OMA, 1992, 18). A 1991 report on A&E implementation also listed "opportunity to participate in and influence the design and operation of Government policies, programs and services" as one of four central components of the Strategy (OMA, 1991a, vii). The incorporation of participation as a principle of A&E reflected a central goal of the *Galbally Report* . In 1995, the OMA stated that "[b]odies whose membership does not reflect the diversity of the Australian community cannot be said to properly represent that community or make decisions on its behalf" (OMA, 1995, 59). This principle holds true for all levels of governance, especially local government which is "closest to the people". In recent years, the A&E principle of participation has had greater emphasis laid upon it, as we show below.

The A&E Strategy had a commendable objective of seeking to "embed A&E considerations in all aspects of the structure of Government programs" (OMA, 1991a, viii). The OMA asserted that the emphasis of the A&E Strategy was "not on special 'add-on' programs but on modifying the objectives, operating mechanisms and style of mainstream programs" (OMA, 1991a, viii). However, the *A&E Annual Report 1995* concluded that many federal agencies were still treating A&E as "an 'add-on', not as an integral part of all their mainstream activities" (OMA, 1995, 11). The following year, a Parliamentary Committee reported that clients and client-advocates found A&E to be an abstract ideal which government agencies tended to tack-on to program formulations as an "afterthought" (HRSCCA, 1996, 21-2, 49).

At the state level similar problems of implementation have occurred. The example of NSW agencies and local government demonstrate similar impediments to progress. The NSW version of A&E had initially been the requirement that all government departments and statutory authorities produce Ethnic Affairs Policy Statements (EAPS). From 1984, EAPS were submitted annually to the NSW EAC which approved the plans or called for revisions. The aim of the NSW EAPS program was to "ensure that all members of the NSW community, regardless of their language, ethnic, racial or cultural background, had equal access to Government services, and that such services were culturally appropriate and non-discriminatory" (EAC NSW, 1990, 6). The EAPS Program in NSW was replaced by the *NSW Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society* in March 1993 (EAC NSW, 1993). The *Charter* required departments and agencies to produce a "Statement of Intent" on how they planned to "diversify their policies and activities" and implement A&E principles (EAC NSW, 1993, 1). The A&E principles enunciated included participation in all levels of public life, respect and accommodation of the culture, language and religion of others, the greatest opportunity to make use of and participate in relevant activities and programs provided and/or administered by state government, and recognition and promotion of NSW's linguistic and cultural diversity as an asset. The effectiveness of the EAPS and Charter programs is difficult to assess, and the evidence contradictory. Some key institutions were able to effectively ignore the requirement to produce an EAPS, such as the Police Service. Nevertheless the EAPS requirement had compelled institutions to confront the need for reform, and to embrace rather than shrink from cultural difference.

In 1987, the NSW Department of Local Government and the Ethnic Affairs Commission helped co-ordinate a pilot Local Government Ethnic Affairs Policy Statement (LEAPS) Project with 13 councils. In 1989, additional resources were dedicated to the Local Government Development Program through the *National Agenda* to assist local councils "develop new models of service provision" and assist "people disadvantaged by linguistic and cultural barriers" (OMA, 1989, 24). Part of this program was a grant to Marrickville Council in Sydney to establish a central translation and publication service for the 13 councils participating in the pilot LEAPS Program (OMA, 1990, 27). LEAPS initiatives, such as those for Sydney's Liverpool City Council, have tended to concentrate upon improving translation services, liaison with local MRCs, the production of information in community languages and staff training (Liverpool City Council, 1992, 10-13). LEAPS have been focused upon improving access to council services and avoiding breaches of regulations through misunderstandings. However, the preparation and circulation of LEAPS may also have increased cultural sensitivity throughout local governments, including planning and building departments, which have responsibility for approving places of worship and other expressions of physical culture. However, the LEAPS initiatives were only selectively taken up and many were too ephemeral in their effects. The LGSA of NSW guide to A&E commented that the common practice within local councils was to appoint a "short-term ethnic worker or a LEAPS Officer" and that "this approach has had limited impact on the corporate culture of Councils" (Blackwell, 1994, 61).

The HRSCCA (1996, 32) found that the "commitment by local government to non-English speaking background constituents is patchy". A&E was found to be a recent consideration in local government, that the level of consultation with NESB residents varied, and that councils generally lacked data on the cultural composition of their own localities (HRSCCA, 1996, 32-3). Community groups were particularly critical of A&E implementation at the state and local government levels, and the Committee expressed dissatisfaction at the lack of a co-ordinated approach to A&E, resulting in a "multitude of locally crafted plans" which added to "the confusion about what A&E should achieve" (HRSCCA, 1996, 43). The Committee's report did however commend the LGSA of NSW for publishing the A&E implementation guide (Blackwell, 1994, 43-4). Indeed we used much of the implementation advice in Blackwell's guide to construct the A&E-type questions that were asked in our survey of local government.

The *A&E Annual Report 1995* asserted that the *Commonwealth-Local Government Accord* would lead to "improved delivery of local government services to ATSI communities and implementation of A&E policies in respect of local government services generally" (OMA, 1995, 79-80). Indeed, the *Commonwealth-Local Government Accord* announced federal funding for "a national project which will develop specific strategies and policies for provision of local government services in relation to people from non-English speaking backgrounds" (Commonwealth Government and Australian Local Government Association, 1995, 16). However, no such project eventuated, and there has been no co-ordinated federal government program to assist local government to implement A&E principles.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (HRSCATSIA) found that federal government agencies had failed to meet the special needs of indigenous Australians by providing mainstream services that were often culturally inappropriate (1993). The OMA found racial and religious barriers to access were substantial for ATSI people and that this group should become a "high priority target" (OMA, 1992, 4,43-4). In all subsequent OMA reports ATSI people and NESB Australians became the "two A&E target groups". Reports since that time have consistently found that the extension of A&E principles to indigenous people had been deficient (OMA, 1995, 12,78). The *Commonwealth-Local Government Accord* announced a "systematic review of the adequacy of Local Government services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities" (Commonwealth Government and Australian Local Government Association, 1995, 16). Once again, no such review or co-ordinated strategy has prevailed. There have, however, been ad-hoc federal government interventions into infrastructure provision for "fringe" and remote indigenous communities, such as through the deployment of Australian Army engineers.

At the NSW Migrant Resource Centre Forum in November 1991 Pebaque argued that "[m]ainstreaming is not working, we know that, and A&E is struggling" with the result that community based organisations were having to dedicate large parts of their time and resources to client advocacy and to monitoring the A&E performance of government agencies (Pembaque, 1991, 6-8). A major problem with the A&E Strategy was a lack of consultation with community groups such as MRCs and GiAs (Pebaque, 1991, 8-12; Kang, 1991, 6). Indeed, OMA's first annual report on A&E was criticised for its lack of community input to counter balance agency input (OMA, 1993). The lack of client and advocate input into the OMA *A&E Annual Report 1993*, clearly concerned community groups and was a blatant contradiction of the core A&E principle of consultation. In response to such criticism, the preparation of the *A&E Annual Report 1994* included a series of community and client consultations (Theophanous, 1994, vii). The resultant report presented a contradictory picture on the institutionalisation of A&E principles. Agency statements indicated an impressive effort on A&E implementation over the two preceding years, whereas clients and community groups argued that for most NESB people the barriers to A&E were widespread (OMA, 1994b, 31, 58, 68). The report concluded that "there are obvious discrepancies between agency statements of their performance and community perceptions of that performance as expressed at the community and client consultations" (OMA, 1994, 93). This reveals the essential role for community consultation on multicultural programs, where without such feedback, departments and agencies are able to manufacture rhetorical improvements in their various reports and statements. The HRSCCA (1996, 114) recommended, if not warned, that in the absence of satisfactory monitoring of A&E implementation a system of client complaint mechanisms should be instituted within all federal service providers.

The *A&E Annual Report 1995* found that indigenous and NESB Australians constituted only five per cent of the membership of federal government decision making and advisory bodies (OMA, 1995, 60,94). The report pointed out that at least 25 per cent of all Australians were either born in a non-

English speaking country (NESC) or had a parent born in one. It concluded that NESB Australians were "substantially under-represented" on decision making bodies (OMA, 1995, 60). Similarly, the HRSCCA was concerned by the poor representation of NESB Australians before Parliamentary hearings (HRSCCA, 1996, 36). Participation is a key aspect of A&E, and along with equity of access to services, and the related reduction of barriers, it is essential for wide and full citizenship.

The voluntary nature of A&E, EAPS and LEAPS has been highlighted as a general cause of the failure to institute the necessary reforms for equitable access to mainstream services (Pebaque, 1991, 10-1). This reflects the reality that "both OMA and the EAC lack a legislative and economic base" (Kang, 1991, 2). The recent shifting, and effective demise, of the OMA out of the Department of Prime Minister by the Howard Coalition Government has further weakened this body. The picture at the state and local level, certainly in NSW, is more encouraging. The NSW Government made a commitment in 1995 to legislate for A&E within local government. The Minister for Local Government established a Reform Taskforce with a sub-committee on Social Planning charged with developing legislative and resource material instructing all councils to carry out a detailed social plan integrating issues relating to ATSI, NESB and disability. This requirement was legislated in a Local Government (General) Amendment (Community Social Plans) Regulation 1998 (*Government Gazette* 16 January 1998). Recent amendments to the NSW *Local Government Act, 1993* means that Section 8(1) now requires a council to "to exercise its functions in a manner that is consistent with and actively promotes the principles of cultural diversity". The amendments also inserted a definition of principles of cultural diversity in the 1993 *Local Government Act*'s dictionary by way of reference to the *Ethnic Affairs Commission Act* 1979. Under Section 428, 2(j) councils are required to provide in annual reports, details of programs undertaken during that year to promote services and access to services for people with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Other relevant official or semi-official "external" policy frameworks that monitor local practice include the NSW *Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society* (EAC NSW, 1993), the NSW EAC White Paper - *Building on our Cultural Diversity* (EAC NSW, 1996). The latter recognised local government "as a significant provider of community services" and responsible for many planning decisions impacting on cultural life. The White Paper identified five issues requiring attention:

- lack of access to community facilities for ethnic community groups
- inconsistent planning decisions, particularly decisions that prevent the construction or use of places of worship
- a need for improved information dissemination to NESB residents about council services, facilities and programs
- a need for more consultation with local residents, including those of NESB in regard to local social and community planning
- the need for improved staff training and education in cross-cultural awareness and anti-racism strategies throughout local government workplaces and council assisted services.

The NSW state government's legislative insistence upon A&E plans in local government may prove to be an effective way of enforcing the provision of services in an equitable fashion and of enabling all citizens to participate in local governance.

Certainly there have been substantial deficiencies in the application of the A&E Strategy over the last decade and a half. The underlying causes include a focus upon institutions learning and utilising the rhetoric of A&E rather than upon an institutional transformation of service delivery; the continued alienation of indigenous and NESB Australians from government services; and the powerlessness of the co-ordinating agencies responsible for enforcing change. Nevertheless, the project is a just and necessary one. It has caused many institutions like local government to overtly recognise their diverse constituency, to integrate this recognition into corporate level planning, and to engage with requisite issues of service delivery.

Inter-communal relations

Although Australia has not experienced serious outbreaks of ethnic unrest, there is an under-current of racism throughout society. The level and extent of racism has been revealed in a series of reports and inquiries since the late 1980s. Reports from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) (1991) and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) both highlighted the existence of racism in Australian society. The National Inquiry into Racist Violence pointed out that racist violence was of a level to cause concern and required immediate intervention (HREOC, 1991, 387). The HREOC considered that racism against Australians of NESB generally manifested in the form of a "threatening environment", with "visibly different" groups, such as hijab-wearing Muslim women, subject to racist intimidation and harassment (1991, 387-8). The first *State of the Nation* report on Australians of NESB concluded that continuing labour market injustices suggested that "systematic discrimination on the grounds of race ... [was] ... at work" (Moss, 1993, 264). In response to these problems, a program of community relations was recommended in the *Jupp Report* (CRMMPS, 1986). Subsequently, the Federal Government used the *National Agenda* statement to promise a program to promote and maintain harmonious community relations (OMA, 1989). In 1991, the three-year CRS was launched to combat "some fundamental problems in community and race relations in Australia"; namely the intolerances which "permeate all strata of the Australian population" (OMA, 1991b, 2).

The CRS had as its three central objectives:
- a reduction in the level of discrimination
- the identification and dismantling of structural impediments to mutual acceptance and respect
- the fostering of greater degrees of cultural tolerance and of appreciation for harmonious community relations (OMA, 1991b, 2-3).

An amount of $5.7 million was dedicated to projects aimed at developing mechanisms for lasting and positive change to inter-communal relations (OMA, 1991b, 1). These included:

- the inclusion of community relations issues into school curricula and the provision of multicultural education resources (p.27)
- funding for specific projects to improve relations between institutions like the police, schools and specific cultural groups (p.10)
- expand community awareness of rights and grievance procedures against prejudice, and support advocacy role of MRCs (pp31-3)
- consideration of racial vilification legislation (p.20)
- funding to enable representatives of indigenous Australians to monitor media portrayals (p.25)
- local community initiatives, through the Office of Local Government, to promote harmonious community relations (p.18)

The OMA produced very useful reports on cross-cultural training for government officers. The two volumes produced in 1994 outlined six different strategies of effective cross-cultural training (OMA, 1994c; 1994d). Importantly for local government, the reports stressed that cross-cultural training worked best when the instructor had a sound knowledge of the local diversity of both the clients and of the organisation / service provider, and when the instruction was integrated as a core training consideration of the organisation (OMA, 1994c, 98).

In 1993, the *CRS Evaluation* was evaluated. It was found that 79 per cent of the projects claimed some positive impact on community relations. This was encouraging considering the experimental nature of the project, and "demonstrated that successful interventions in community relations can be made". It was also concluded that there was little possibility of measuring with certainty the degree of impact of the CRS, and that the various projects possessed an "impression of transience". This meant that an opportunity was missed to learn from or to institutionalise many of the successful projects (Morrissey and Mitchell, 1993, 20-1, 64, 97, 119). It worked against the objective of effecting lasting transformation on the community relations environment. The *CRS Evaluation* recommended that further community relations interventions should focus on the relations between institutions, such as the police and local government, and various community groups (Morrissey and Mitchell, 1993, 17-8, 103).

The CRS had focused upon effecting attitudinal change rather than transforming, or developing, institutions to combat racism. In the attempt to reduce intolerance the CRS was based upon a model in which:

> poor community relations is approached almost exclusively as arising out of cultural and linguistic dissonance, giving rise to objectives and activities related almost entirely to provision of cultural knowledge. Predominantly, although not exclusively, this was cultural knowledge directed *at* the relatively dominant group *about* the relatively

powerless. In all of this, the questions of structural change and empowerment tended to be submerged (Morrissey and Mitchell, 1993, 65).

Subsequently, the Government's focus on attitudes has moved from improving tolerance of cultural difference, to the celebration and utilisation of difference and diversity. The *Creative Nation* statement proclaimed Australia as a society in which diversity would not only be tolerated but encouraged (DCA, 1994, 6). The focus upon attitudinal change through the provision of cultural information is a legitimate element of community relations intervention. Indeed there is no better counter to the notion that diversity equals disharmony than the advertising of living examples of harmonious and mutually beneficial difference. Nevertheless, projects promoting cultural diversity dominated in the CRS, and there were few projects that grappled with systematic discrimination.

The evaluation of the CRS recommended that the Government clarify the intentions of the program, and they suggested that "anti-racism [be] its central objective" (Morrissey and Mitchell, 1993, 5,114-5). The second round of the community relations project was the Community Relations Agenda (CRA) announced in June 1994. Its goals were:

- to foster and promote harmonious community relations

- to contribute to national identity

- to encourage acceptance of diversity and inclusive portrayal in the media (OMA, 1994, 1-2).

The emphasis of the CRA was upon portraying harmonious community relations in a positive context. A plan to use the arts and sport as vehicles for these messages was also announced (OMA, 1994, 17,20). The new program made no mention of reducing discrimination or structural impediments. It also ignored the anti-racism recommendation in the *CRS Evaluation*. These matters became the concern of anti-discrimination institutions and legislation (see below). More recently, as a result of anecdotal evidence of hate crimes, the Howard Government announced an anti-racism campaign. However its release was delayed until August 1998 and scaled back from a promised $10 million advertising and development grant campaign. Only $2.5 million will be spent, and these funds will only be released at the beginning of 1999 (DIMA, 1998). The advertising component has been dropped from the first stage of the project, which is now entirely comprised by 50 grants of $50,000 to "organisations able to develop projects to promote harmony between people and groups of different cultural background". The so-called "anti-racism campaign" appears to be a poorer version of the 1991 CRS. Like that strategy it is likely to be focussed upon providing cultural information about non-Anglo-Celtic cultures, without directly addressing specific problems of inter-communal relations or institutionalised prejudice.

One implicit danger of state-sponsored promotion of positive portrayals of a multicultural society, is that these representations can begin to elide existing problems of prejudice and institutional discrimination. There is often an assumption of a racist past and a harmonious present / future. The

development of durable anti-discrimination institutions are essential. The key anti-discrimination bodies in Australia are the federal HREOC and various state-level institutions such as the Anti-Discrimination Board (ADB) in NSW. The HREOC was established by federal government legislation in 1986, replacing the Human Rights Commission (HRCA) which had been established in 1981. The objectives of the HREOC were the protection and enhancement of human rights and the ensuring of Australian compliance with human rights obligations under international law (HREOC, 1991, 3). It is responsible for administering, among others, the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Commonwealth) (*RDA*), and the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986* (Commonwealth). In NSW the ADB administers the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* which outlaws discrimination on a host of grounds.

The federal and most state anti-discrimination mechanisms have been amended to also outlaw racial vilification. A number of important national reports had recommended that federal legislation be amended to prohibit vilification (Australian Law Reform Commission, 1992, 155-63; HREOC, 1991, 297-302; RCIADIC, 1991c, 74-5). The Federal Government attempted to institute anti-vilification through the *Racial Discrimination Amendment Bill 1992* and then again in *Racial Hatred Bill 1995*. This latter legislation amended the *RDA 1975* and instituted a civil prohibition against acts likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate people based on their "race", colour, national or ethnic origin. The criminal provisions in the Bill were dropped but the Keating Labor Government stressed its commitment to later institute "remedies in the criminal law to deal with extreme racist behaviour" (Attorney General's Department, 1995, 1). The success of the *Racial Hatred Act* since 1995 has been difficult to assess (but see Jureidini, 1997). More fundamentally, the High Court of Australia determined in 1996 that the HREOC did not have the power to make binding determinations or directions, and that all matters which could not be conciliated must be heard afresh by a Federal Court. This ruling severely weakened the powers of the federal anti-discrimination body and has smothered its ability to remedy problematic aspects of inter-communal relations.

In 1989, the NSW *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* was amended to include racial vilification provisions, and again in 1993 to add vilification on the grounds of "ethno-religious" affiliation, homosexuality and HIV. The provisions of the *Anti-Discrimination (Racial Vilification) Amendment Act 1989* made racial vilification unlawful, and serious racial vilification punishable by imprisonment. Racial vilification was defined as an act intended to "incite hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of, a person or groups of persons on the ground of race". The ADB was able to compel an offender to make an apology, retraction, put in place programs / policy, or pay damages to those who had been vilified. Serious racial vilification, which referred to the threat of racist violence or incitement of others to violence, attracted a maximum penalty of 6 months jail or a $5,000 fine. Most complaints made to the ADB under the legislation are resolved in the conciliation phase, without being referred to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal. One of the obvious problems with the legislation, as it relates to the threat of and incitement to racist violence, is that this serious offence, which is punishable by a jail term, is not located in the (NSW) *Crimes Act 1900* but in the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*. Despite the problems

inherent in relations between police and various ethnic communities, it is both desirable and practical in a just society that incitement to, or threats of, racist violence are dealt with as crimes by the police.

The inability of the federal and state level anti-racism mechanisms to effectively police and judge acts of racism makes organisation-based community relations interventions all the more important. Internal anti-racism policies, grievance procedures and cross-cultural training are critical within organisations like local government. As mentioned above, the NSW EAC White Paper *Building on our Cultural Diversity* (1996) noted that local government was responsible for many planning decisions impacting on cultural life. The White Paper advocated more consultation with local residents and improved staff training in cross-cultural awareness and anti-racism strategies, in both local government workplaces and council assisted services. Local government cannot rely on central-state authorities to ameliorate local inter-communal problems. The external image of a locality and the extent of full citizenship amongst local residents dramatically depends upon inter-communal relations. Councils cannot afford to ignore the social, symbolic and economic costs of inter-communal discord and a debilitating image.

Expression

The maintenance of cultural difference has been a founding and core principle of the Multicultural Project. The early enunciations on multiculturalism included the overt principle that cultural difference be maintained and that all Australians had a right to retain and express cultural identity (AEAC, 1977, 16; RMSP, *Galbally Report*, 1978, 4; CRMMPS, *Jupp Report*, 1986; OMA, *National Agenda*, 1989, vii). The *NSW Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society* stressed that all institutions in NSW, including local government, must accommodate cultural, linguistic and religious difference and afford all people the opportunity to participate and express their cultural identity. In the *Creative Nation* cultural policy statement, the Federal Government announced a recognition "that the ownership of a heritage and identity, and the means of self-expression and creativity, are essential human needs and essential to the health of society" (DCA, 1994, 5).

The main media outlet for cultural expression which is beyond the Anglo-Celtic "mainstream" has been SBS and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (DCA, 1994, 12, 46-9; Jupp, 1996, 16). However there are other important manifestations of diversity including a host of vigorous sporting and cultural clubs. Soccer clubs for example have been linked with the maintenance and expression of non-Anglo culture during the "assimilation" times in Australia (Mosely, 1994). These sporting and cultural clubs have received small amounts of federal and state funding at various periods. Local governments retain a very important role in looking after the physical and infrastructure needs of these clubs, thus allowing them to cultivate and express their culture. The CRA for example, announced an intent to use the arts and sport as vehicles for "demonstrating positive elements of diversity" (OMA, 1994, 17,20).

Governments also have a fundamental role in protecting physical culture, such as heritage landscapes and sites of religious significance. The *National Agenda* announced a plan to co-ordinate the efforts of

cultural heritage institutions such that their practices and collections would reflect the cultural diversity of Australia (OMA, 1989, 49). Later, the *Creative Nation* cultural policy set an objective of ensuring that Australia's heritage adequately represent the nation's diversity (DCA, 1994, 69). Local councils are already instructed to allow for the protection of sites which have been deemed by federal or state agencies to have heritage significance. Most councils have also implemented local heritage plans, which include heritage walks of streetscapes. Councils should also endeavour to ensure that this built heritage represent a diversity of local cultural forms.

The multiculturalism principle of expression has had perhaps the least institutional support by way of programs or policy. The cultivation, protection and expression of cultural difference is nonetheless a foundation of multiculturalism, and stands as a key definitional break from assimilationism. The paucity of central-government intervention in this area is likely related to the difficulties in formulating universal strategies to assist with what will always be "local diversities". Local government retains a key role in assisting with cultural expression, whether it be through cultural festivals, displays, streetscaping, development control plans, culturally sensitive planning, or the protection of built heritage and sites of significance to ATSI people.

Debating multiculturalism

Australia's increasingly multicultural population and the attendant social, economic and political changes have spawned ongoing policy debate. Morrissey and Mitchell refer to the criticisms as "backwashes and eddies" against the progression of the Multicultural Project (1993, 22-5). The critiques are not especially reactions to the fact of diversity as such, but they are especially opposed to the possibility of institutional change or of altered definitions of nationhood. On the surface it appears incongruous that in an era of cultural diversity there should be opposition to an institutional practice of multiculturalism. Of course there is an unavoidable link between the fact of multicultural composition and the need for multicultural policy.

We mentioned previously that multiculturalism was the focus of national debates in 1984 and again in 1988. Both of these debates saw the establishment of government inquiries, the production of reports and recommendations to government. Indeed, these periods of debate and examination gave rise to some of the landmark statements on multicultural policy, such as the *Jupp Report* (CRMMPS, 1986) and the *National Agenda* statement (OMA, 1989). Since 1996, there has been another period of debate and re-assessment. This has been largely inspired by the election of the Howard Coalition Government and the rise of the One Nation Party. The Coalition came to power with a platform which included a critical re-assessment of service provision to disadvantaged and "special interest" groups (Howard, 1995, 11,14). The One Nation Party has vigorously asserted an opposition to multiculturalism and advocated a return to assimilationism (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2.7.98, 4; Hanson, 1996, 3862). The contemporary opponents of multiculturalism have had much more political success than their forebears in the 1980s. A return to assimilationist public policy would be a tragic institutional step. Much now depends upon both the recommendations of the NMAC (due late 1998) and the Howard

Government's response. The brief review of multicultural policy in Australia suggests that the project will emerge from the current controversy stronger than ever and even more entrenched. This will not just happen of course. It will require carefully considered and well argued justifications.

The Multicultural Project has made significant advances in a short period. There are significant short-comings too, such as service blind-spots and inadequate protection from discrimination. However, a most important change is underway: the shift in national identity and the acceptance of the fact of multicultural composition. That symbolic shift has been a crucial structural change at the national level. It has provided an expanded basis of citizenship, and justified wider access to services and diverse cultural expression. This is a change which is also being made at the local government level. But multicultural policy must be defended anew. Recent debate has provided an opportunity to revisit and re-affirm the core principles, and to provide fresh justifications of the policy.

Chapter Three
GEOGRAPHIES OF DIVERSITY

Over time geographic variation between cities, municipalities and shires in the cultural and ethnic diversity of populations has increased in Australia. Much of the increase is a consequence of urban-rural differences, resulting from enhanced economic opportunities being found in the large cities and more limited opportunities existing in many rural areas. However, few regions in Australia have insignificant representations of migrant or indigenous populations. Within the large cities, the gradient in diversity between areas has tended to decrease over time (Hugo and Mahor, 1995; Burnley 1996a; Burnley *et al* 1997). This chapter examines trends in local diversity for Australia, taking into consideration migration processes and changing economic factors. It then examines variations within states by local government areas (LGAs) and establishes the context for consideration of survey responses.

Some methodological and data limitations must be mentioned at the outset. First, the Australian census does not have a question on ethnicity or culture. The nearest questions are those pertaining to overseas or local birthplace, language usually spoken at home, and religion. In the present exercise, the emphasis is on language usually spoken at home (by persons over five years of age), although analyses by birthplace are also considered. The advantage with language usually spoken at home is first, that many of the second generation (Australian-born with overseas-born parents) are also included. At the same time it should be realised that many persons who speak a language other than English (LOTE) at home actually have a good working knowledge of English. Second, language is a good indicator of cultural origin, and in some cases is better than birthplace. For example many persons born in Malaysia, Indonesia and even Vietnam and who are resident in Australia are actually Chinese-speakers. Third, language gives a fair impression of the local population impacts of immigrant-origin communities and thus of cultural and linguistic diversity. Fourth, language gives an indication of cultural plurality in areas having above average representations of immigrants of non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB).

There are other methodological problems. Local government areas vary greatly in geographic extent and population size. In population, some cities within metropolitan Sydney exceed 200,000 people (for example, Blacktown) and some of the recent municipal amalgamations in the Melbourne metropolitan area are as large. Meanwhile even in NSW one or two Shires have populations of less than 2,000 people (for example, Murrurundi), whereas in Queensland several rural Shires have less than 500 people. Even within the metropolitan cities there are considerable variations in the size of LGAs and populations, a situation which the Victorian state government has partly ameliorated in metropolitan Melbourne. All these factors must be borne in mind when making comparisons of cultural diversity between areas or in the capacity of local government of vastly different sizes to respond to such diversity.

Interstate variations in the distribution of English and NESB birthplace groups in 1996

Broad interstate distributions in the main categories of the population of Australia in 1996 are shown in Table 3.1. These interstate differences largely reflect recent community formation processes in the large cities, changes in the population and economic dynamics of regional Australia, the effects of globalisation of the Australian economy (and uneven interstate impacts from this) as well as the emergence of Sydney as a global city (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982; Searle, 1996; Burnley, 1998). NESB groups are understood to be those birthplace groups emanating from societies in which English is not the usual language spoken at home, although many people there may speak English. A fundamental categorisation within these groups is made between those populations which mostly settled in Australia before the mid 1970s, and those groups which mostly settled in Australia after the mid 1970s, that is, in the last 20 years. The key dividing line was the abolition of the White Australia Policy in 1974.

Table 3.1   Per cent distributions of birthplace/ language/ cultural groups by state and territory, 1996

State or Territory	Australian-born Per cent	Indigenous population Per cent	English-speaking immigrant population Per cent	Longer resident immigrant population of NESB Per cent	More recent immigrant population of NESB Per cent
New South Wales	33.7	26.3	28.8	37.0	43.2
Victoria	24.6	6.3	20.6	35.0	31.7
Queensland	18.9	26.4	18.1	9.5	7.5
South Australia	8.4	6.1	10.6	7.6	5.8
Western Australia	8.6	15.8	17.4	8.1	8.4
Tasmania	3.1	3.4	1.9	0.9	0.6
Northern Territory	1.1	15.0	0.9	0.5	0.8
Australian Capital Territory	1.6	0.7	1.7	1.4	2.0
Total Per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Numbers	13,534,000	305,000	1,680,400	1,215,440	1,142,040

Source: ABS Census, 1996. Customised tables and birthplace and indigenous population statistics

Notes: (1)"Longer resident" immigrant population refers to those NESB birthplace groups, most of whose members settled in Australia before 1976
(2)"More recent" immigrant population refers to those NESB birthplace groups most of whose members arrived after 1976

Whereas 33.7 per cent of the Australian-born population was resident in NSW, 43 per cent of the more recently arrived groups were also resident. Sydney disproportionately shared in this newer migration. Meanwhile, whereas Queensland contained almost 19 per cent of the Australian-born population, it only contained 7.5 per cent of the more recently arrived populations. Western Australia, which also has a large immigrant population (17.4 per cent of English speaking background immigrants in Australia residing there) had only eight per cent of NESB immigrants living there (Table 3.1).

Over time NSW has become the most multicultural state relatively and absolutely, and South Australia and Tasmania the least multicultural. Historically Victoria had attracted the most immigrants of any

single state, and up to the early 1970s, Melbourne was the immigrant city of Australia, with the largest southern and eastern European communities. This was because of the heavy concentration of manufacturing industry in Melbourne, and the fact that much of Australia's post-war immigration program was geared to the provision of labour for manufacturing industry.

Major structural changes in manufacturing industries in the 1970s, the progressive reduction in tariffs, the growth of capital flows and international investments in NSW and the emergence of a post-industrial international service economy favoured particular sectoral expansions in Sydney. This led to the attraction of large numbers of post "White Australia" migration to Sydney, who became employed in all sectors of the economy.

Variations in the urbanisation of overseas-born groups in Australia in 1996

Customised tables were obtained from the ABS 1996 census by statistical local area (SLA). These were grouped into the metropolitan statistical division and other major urban complexes (such as the Gold Coast, greater Newcastle, Wollongong, Geelong, Townsville, Cairns) which had populations of over 100,000 people; other predominantly urban SLAs; and, rural areas. This was done to show the functional relationship between the economic urban and rural zones of Australia and the distribution of a wide range of immigrant and Australian birthplace groups. Such variations translate into considerations of difference in population characteristics between LGAs. Table 3.2 shows urban rural distributions of the five population categories considered in Table 3.1: the Australian-born, the indigenous population (who are of course a sub-category of the Australian-born); English-speaking background immigrants (those born in the United Kingdom and Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United States and Canada); the longer-resident populations of NESB; and the more recent immigrant population of NESB.

Table 3.2   Urban-rural distributions of birthplace/ language/ cultural groups in Australia, 1996

Category	Australian-born	Indigenous population	English-speaking immigrant population	Longer resident immigrant population of NESB	More recent immigrant population of NESB
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Major urban	57.6	26.7	70.1	81.7	90.1
Other urban	25.5	40.9	18.2	11.4	7.5
Rural	16.9	32.4	11.7	6.9	2.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ABS Census, 1996. Customised tables and   birthplace and indigenous population statistics
Notes: (1)"Longer resident" immigrant population refers to those NESB birthplace groups, most of whose members settled in Australia before 1976
(2)"More recent" immigrant population refers to those NESB birthplace groups most of whose members arrived after 1976

Table 3.2 shows that whereas 57.6 per cent of the Australian-born population resided in major urban areas, 81.7 per cent of longer resident immigrant populations did so, compared to over 90 per cent of

the more recent NESB immigrant groups. Meanwhile, whereas almost 26 per cent of the Australian-born resided in "other urban" areas, only 7.5 per cent of the more recent NESB immigrant population so resided. Finally, whereas almost 17 per cent of the Australian-born were in rural areas, only 2.4 per cent of the more recent NESB immigrant population lived there. The indigenous population was considerably more "rural" than any other population category, and considerably less metropolitanised, with an appreciable proportion residing in lesser urban centres.

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 show urban-rural distributions of the longer resident and "recent" immigrant populations by major birthplace groups in considerably more detail. It should be noted that several of the European groups, asterisked in Table 3.3, have had both recent and longer term migrations. Over 95 per cent of the following birthplace groups were resident in "major urban" centres: Cambodia, Chile, El Salvador, Iraq, Lebanon, Taiwan, Uruguay and Vietnam. All of these groups are in the "more recent" arrival category. Between 90-94 per cent of the following birthplace groups resided in major urban areas: Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Romania, Turkey, "the former USSR" Argentina, Bangladesh, Burma, China, Hong Kong, Iran, Israel, Korea, Laos, Pakistan, Portugal, and Sri Lanka. Two thirds of these were "recently arrived" groups. Meanwhile, the only groups that had considerable proportions resident in rural areas were those born in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. All of these were comparatively long-resident populations. No "recently arrived" group, as defined above, had more than 4.5 per cent resident in rural areas in aggregate, and most had two per cent or less in rural areas, compared to 16.9 per cent of the Australia-born. It follows that the major urban areas have the largest NESB immigrant populations in a proportional and absolute sense, especially the more recent arrivals. This has been primarily because the growth in new job opportunities in the last 20 years, and especially in the last decade, has primarily been in the major urban areas and particularly in the metropolitan cities. Secondly, however, once communities form in the cities, more recent arrivals will join them because of the social, communal and cultural support offered there. It is also possible that some more recently arrived groups have experienced greater discrimination in smaller centres and have thus left them for the larger cities.

Table 3.3   Level of urbanisation of longer resident immigrant populations of NESB in Australia, 1996.

Birthplace	Major urban	Other urban	Rural	Total	Total population
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Persons
Austria	73.9	14.8	11.3	100.0	21,100
Belgium	70.9	15.5	13.6	100.0	4,940
Bulgaria	88.5	5.8	5.7	100.0	2,240
Cyprus	91.9	5.3	2.8	100.0	21,600
Former Czechoslovakia	81.0	11.4	7.6	100.0	18,800
Denmark	66.7	18.3	15.0	100.0	9,250
Egypt	94.1	3.7	2.2	100.0	39,800
Estonia	76.2	13.4	10.4	100.0	2,840
Finland	69.9	17.1	13.0	100.0	9,100
France	76.8	13.0	10.2	100.0	15.05
Germany	67.9	17.7	14.4	100.0	94,000
Greece	93.4	4.1	2.5	100.0	126,600
Hungary	83.5	9.6	6.9	100.0	25,300
Italy	84.1	8.4	7.5	100.0	238,200
Latvia	81.6	11.9	6.5	100.0	8,020
Lithuania	84.1	9.9	6.0	100.0	4,300
Malta	83.6	7.0	9.4	100.0	52,100
Netherlands	60.5	22.1	17.4	100.0	70,500
Norway	68.2	18.8	13.0	100.0	2,700
Poland *	87.6	9.0	3.4	100.0	65,100
Romania *	90.5	5.9	3.6	100.0	12,400
Spain	85.2	9.4	5.4	100.0	13,580
Sweden *	71.7	14.8	13.5	100.0	6,100
Switzerland *	67.4	15.1	17.5	100.0	9,200
Turkey *	94.6	3.6	1.8	100.0	22,410
Ukraine	84.8	10.5	4.7	100.0	13,560
Other former USSR *	93.3	4.3	2.4	100.0	22,500
Former Yugoslavia *	89.3	6.0	4.7	100.0	175,100

Source: ABS Census, 1996. Customised tables
Note: * groups which have had some recent as well as post-war migration

Table 3.4   Level of urbanisation of more recent immigrant populations of NESB in Australia 1996

Birthplace	Major urban	Other urban	Rural	Total	Total population
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Persons
Argentina	92.9	4.2	2.9	100.0	12,400
Bangladesh	94.0	4.7	1.3	100.0	2,800
Burma	90.7	6.1	3.2	100.0	9,100
Cambodia	98.6	0.6	0.8	100.0	21,580
Chile	95.1	3.5	1.4	100.0	27,000
China	93.7	4.4	1.9	100.0	110,940
El Salvador	96.5	2.9	0.6	100.0	8,800
Fiji	89.5	7.0	3.5	100.0	34,200
Hong Kong	93.3	5.0	1.7	100.0	68,420
India	87.7	8.1	4.2	100.0	77,620
Indonesia	85.6	10.3	4.1	100.0	64,140
Iran	94.4	3.9	1.7	100.0	16,230
Iraq	95.7	1.7	2.6	100.0	13,990
Israel	94.2	3.0	2.8	100.0	7,400
Japan	88.7	7.3	4.0	100.0	23,020
Korea	93.9	3.5	2.6	100.0	30,010
Laos	94.5	4.2	1.3	100.0	10,900
Lebanon	97.2	1.6	1.2	100.0	70,210
Malaysia	89.5	7.1	3.4	100.0	75,470
Pakistan	90.1	6.7	3.2	100.0	8,380
Philippines	83.0	12.1	4.9	100.0	92,930
Portugal	93.2	4.9	1.9	100.0	17,700
Singapore	87.3	8.2	4.5	100.0	29,410
Sri Lanka	91.3	6.3	2.4	100.0	46,980
Taiwan	95.0	1.7	3.3	100.0	15,000
Thailand	85.0	10.5	4.5	100.0	18,950
Tonga	89.7	6.4	3.9	100.0	6,300
Uruguay	95.7	2.8	1.5	100.0	11,100
Vietnam	97.7	1.3	1.0	100.0	151,060

Source: ABS Census, 1996. Customised tables

Proportions of the Population of LGAs Comprised of NESB Populations and the Question of Diversity.

Whereas the previous analysis considered distributional aspects, here we consider population impacts and the composition of immigrant and language populations in areas of relatively high proportions of NESB people. Table 3.5 depicts the 15 SLAs in Australia ranked in order of the highest proportions of NESB overseas-born in their populations, as well as the percentage of the major birthplace groups of the NESB population. All were in Sydney and Melbourne, and all had 30 per cent or more comprising NESB immigrant groups, the highest proportion being in Fairfield City in Sydney, NSW. In Western Australia the highest proportion was in Vincent (26 per cent), and in South Australia, in Thebarton (27 per cent), and in Tasmania, in Hobart City (9 per cent).

The table also shows that in the 15 SLAs with highest proportions of NESB groups in Australia, there were *many* birthplace groups. There is no pattern of any one immigrant group to be dominant in an LGA population. In other words, there is a real trend towards diversity and multiculturalism in a population and cultural sense as opposed to bi-culturalism, more especially in the larger cities, and particularly in Sydney and Melbourne.

Table 3.6 depicts the ten LGAs in each mainland state with the *least* proportions of NESB birthplace groups in aggregate in their populations, and the actual number of such persons. In all but extremely few remote and small LGAs, NESB persons were represented. All the regions with very low overseas-born NESB representation were inland rural areas. It is interesting to note that in Victoria there were significant numbers (well in excess of 100 NESB people) in almost all of the low proportion LGAs. This reflects considerable rural settlement of southern Europeans and some other groups in the interwar and immediate post Second World War period, who had been engaged in horticultural and cash cropping activities.

Table 3.6   The ten LGAs in each mainland state with the least proportion of NESB persons

New South Wales			Victoria			Queensland		
LGA	Persons*	Per cent	LGA	Persons*	Per cent	LGA	Persons*	Per cent
Warren	25	0.8	French Island	-	0.0	Ilfracombe	2	0.
Lachlan	61	0.8	Moyne	180	1.1	Bungil	6	0.
Guyra	41	1.0	Yarriambiack	112	1.4	Mornington	4	0.
Gundagai	37	1.0	Buloke	108	1.4	Tambo	3	0.
Urana	16	1.1	North Grampians	184	1.4	Warroo	7	0.
Uninc. Far West	12	1.1	Gannawarra	213	1.8	Taroom	21	0.
Manilla	38	1.2	Hindmarsh	118	1.8	Aramac	7	0.
Weddin	47	1.2	South Grampians	326	1.9	Waggamba	25	0.
Boorowa	47	1.2	West Wimmera	94	1.9	Jericho	9	0.
Coolamon	54	1.4	Corangamite	370	2.2	Bendemere	9	0.
South Australia			Western Australia					
LGA	Persons*	Per cent	LGA	Persons*	Per cent			
Uninc. Western	-	0.0	Murchison	-	0.0			
Uninc. Riverland	-	0.0	Ngaanyatjarraku	12	0.8			
Uninc. Lincoln	-	0.0	Morawa	13	1.2			
Carrieton	-	0.0	Trayning	6	1.3			
Cleve	10	0.5	Perenjori	9	1.3			
Uninc. Pirie	3	0.8	Williams	14	1.4			
Blyth-Stowtown	18	0.9	Kent	11	1.4			
Browns Well	3	1.0	Wyalkatchem	4	1.5			
Kimba	13	1.1	Quairading	19	1.6			
Elliston	13	1.1	Wongan-Ballidu	25	1.6			

Source: ABS Census 1996. Customised tables
Notes: (1) Overseas visitors excluded
               (2) 'Not Stated' birthplace excluded

Table 3.5   The 15 LGAs in Australia with the highest proportion of people born in NES countries and the proportion in those areas of eight selected birthplace categories, 1996

LGA	NESB Overseas Born	Location	Selected NESB overseas-born population comprised of major birthplace groups and reported as a proportion of all NESB persons							
			Italy	Greece	Lebanon	Vietnam	China	Former Yugoslavia	Hong Kong	Sri Lanka India
	Per cent		Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
(1) Fairfield	50.6	Sydney	6.5	1.4	3.2	27.0	4.8	5.1	1.6	2.
(2) Auburn	48.5	Sydney	4.7	2.1	10.6	15.3	15.0	4.1	1.9	3.
(3) Canterbury	45.6	Sydney	5.5	11.6	15.1	8.7	12.6	4.5	1.6	2.
(4) Greater Dandenong	44.1	Melbourne	4.9	2.4	1.6	16.3	7.1	4.9	20.9	2.
(5) Ashfield	41.2	Sydney	16.3	3.8	3.6	2.1	20.7	3.8	3.5	4.

(6) Brimbank	41.0	Melbourne	7.2	4.8	3.1	15.4	2.3	14.2	2.1	1.
(7) Botany	40.8	Sydney	4.2	8.8	3.1	3.1	5.7	4.2	1.1	0.
(8) Burwood	40.5	Sydney	13.0	5.0	7.2	3.2	13.9	2.6	5.8	3.
(9) Maribrynong	39.8	Melbourne	6.5	5.6	4.1	31.0	3.9	5.1	1.2	0.
(10) Strathfield	39.6	Sydney	7.3	4.1	5.4	3.2	11.9	7.9	6.5	17.
(11) Marrickville	37.6	Sydney	4.0	13.2	5.2	11.9	9.2	5.1	2.1	3.
(12) Rockdale	33.9	Sydney	5.3	12.5	9.4	14.9	2.1	22.4	1.9	2.
(13) Whittlesea	32.1	Melbourne	20.2	12.1	3.9	4.7	2.1	20.4	2.8	0.
(14) Moreland	31.9	Melbourne	28.0	10.7	3.6	2.3	2.9	22.1	1.9	2.
(15) Darebin	30.9	Melbourne	24.2	15.8	4.1	4.4	5.5	11.1	2.1	2.

Source: ABS Census, 1996. Customised tables

Proportions of the Population of LGAs Comprised of Persons Speaking LOTE at Home and the Question of Cultural Diversity.

Language is a better indicator of culture and diversity than birthplace as it includes the second generation, although some first and second generation persons do not speak their ancestral language at home. Table 3.7 and Table 3.8 show respectively the percentages of LGAs in NSW and in Victoria with given proportions of the population speaking LOTE at home. These proportions are also shown by major region and urban size class in the respective states. Thus one can examine the proportion of Sydney LGAs with over (say) 50 per cent of their population speaking LOTE, compared with the proportions in other zones of the state. Also shown is the total number of LGAs in each of the broad zones of the two states. For instance in NSW, 40.9 per cent of the 44 LGAs in metropolitan Sydney had more than 35 per cent of their population speaking LOTE at home.

It is clear that *every* LGA in metropolitan Sydney and Melbourne had a significant level of population diversity, defined as more than five per cent of the population speaking LOTE at home. None of the secondary major urban LGAs (those in the Newcastle, Wollongong and Geelong urban complexes) had less than five per cent of their populations speaking LOTE, and this was the case with all the inland regional cities in Victoria and almost all those in NSW. By "regional cities" we mean urban centres of 15-20,000 people or more. Those having significantly high NESB languages proportions were Queanbeyan, Goulburn and Lismore in NSW. Queanbeyan had 4,900 speaking LOTE. In Armidale there were 1940 LOTE speakers, in Wagga Wagga 2730, in Albury 2880, and in Lismore, 2610.

Table 3.7   Numbers and percentages of LGAs in NSW with given proportions of the population speaking a language other than English at home, 1996.

Zone	65-69 Per cent	50-64 Per cent	35-49 Per cent	20-34 Per cent	5-19 Per cent	< 5 Per cent	Total Per cent	Total number of LGAs
	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)		
Metropolitan Sydney	3 (6.8)	6 (13.6)	9 (20.5)	11 (25.0)	15 (34.1)	0 (0.0)	100.0	44
Wollongong – Newcastle regions	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	8 (88.9)	0 (0.0)	100.0	9
Inland regional cities	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (8.3)	10 (83.4)	1 (8.3)	100.0	12
Inland smaller centres and rural areas	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	29 (34.1)	56 (65.9)	100.0	85
Other Coastal	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (29.2)	17 (70.8)	100.0	24
Total NSW	3 (1.7)	6 (3.4)	9 (5.2)	13 (7.5)	69 (39.7)	74 (42.5)	100.0	174

Source: ABS Census, 1996. Customised tables

Table 3.8 Percentages of LGAs in Victoria with given proportions of the population speaking a language other than English at home, 1996.

Zone	65-69 Per cent	50-64 Per cent	35-49 Per cent	20-34 Per cent	5-19 Per cent	< 5 Per cent	Total Per cent	Total number of LGAs
	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)		
Metropolitan Melbourne	0 (0.0)	3 (9.6)	7 (22.6)	11 (35.5)	10 (32.3)	0 (0.0)	100.0	31
Geelong	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	100.0	1
Inland regional cities	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	100.0	7
Smaller urban centres and rural areas	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	24 (68.5)	11 (31.5)	100.0	35
Total Victoria	0 (0.0)	3 (4.1)	7 (9.5)	11 (14.9)	42 (56.6)	11 (14.9)	100.0	74

Source: ABS Census, 1996. Customised tables.

The proportions of persons of LOTE background were smaller in the more rural inland LGAs. However in Australia generally, a number of inland and coastal mining or refining centres have attracted immigrants with a diversity of linguistic backgrounds, notably Kalgoorlie, Boulder and the Pilbara in Western Australia; Cooper Pedy, Port Pirie and Whyalla in South Australia; Cloncurry, Mt Isa and Gladstone in Queensland, and Broken Hill in NSW amongst others. Other rural SLAs such as Wentworth, Leeton and Griffith in NSW; Ayr, Hinchinbrook, Mareeba and Innisfail in north Queensland; Harvey in Western Australia; Renmark in South Australia; and Myrtleford, Wangaratta, Mildura and others in Victoria also had significant numbers of LOTE speakers.

A number of non-major urban LGAs in coastal NSW have been experiencing internal migration from Sydney and Melbourne, sometimes called "counterurbanisation" (Sant and Simons, 1993; Burnley, 1996a, 1996b). This involves retirement migrations and others seeking jobs or a relaxed lifestyle in the rapidly growing coastal zone LGAs. Numbers of NESB groups have joined in this migration to the coastal zone LGAs. For instance there were 2,500 LOTE speakers in Byron, 3740 in Coffs Harbour; 1680 in Greater Taree, 2370 in Hastings; 1400 in Ballina, 1330 in Great Lakes, and 4240 in the Shoalhaven.

Using the language criterion, Table 3.9 shows the 15 most culturally diverse LGAs in Australia in 1996 as measured by the proportion of the total population speaking LOTE at home. All 15 were in Sydney and Melbourne. The highest proportion was almost 68 per cent in Fairfield LGA in Sydney, with proportions almost as high in the LGAs of Auburn and Canterbury, also in Sydney. Brimbank City (Sunshine Keilor) in outer western Melbourne had the highest proportion of people speaking LOTE at home in Victoria. The very highest proportions were in residential districts where the older and newer migrations since the Second World War had taken place, that is, where substantial numbers of both "longer resident" and "more recent" groups had settled. For example, in Brimbank City there are sizeable Eastern European, Italian, Maltese, Vietnamese and Croatian communities.

Table 3.9   The 15 LGAs in Australia with the highest proportions of people speaking a language other than English at home, 1996

LGA	Population speaking a LOTE at home Per cent	Location of LGA
(1) Fairfield City	67.5	Outer western Sydney
(2) Auburn City	67.4	Inner western Sydney
(3) Canterbury City	66.1	Inner southern Sydney
(4) Brimbank City (Sunshine – Keilor SLAs)	58.4	Outer western Melbourne
(5) Burwood City	54.2	Inner western Sydney
(6) Botany City	52.4	Inner southern Sydney
(7) Greater Dandenong	52.1	Outer southeastern Melbourne
(8) Ashfield City	52.0	Inner Sydney
(9) Marrickville City	51.1	Inner Sydney
(10) Strathfield City	51.1	Inner western Sydney
(11) Maribyrnong City	51.1	Outer Melbourne
(12) Rockdale City	50.0	Inner southern Sydney
(13) Darebin City (Northcote – Preston)	48.6	Inner northern Melbourne
(14) Moreland City (Brunswick, Coburg North)	48.2	Inner northern Melbourne
(15) Hume City (Broadmeadows - Craigieburn)	46.0	Outer northern Melbourne

Source: ABS Census, 1996. Customised tables

Finally, Table 3.10 depicts the ten LGAs in NSW in 1996 which had the greatest cultural diversity, as indicated by language spoken at home. These are all in Sydney. Also shown ranked in order from left to right are the six largest language groups in each LGA. The important points are first that several large groups are present in each LGA, although the largest is always the English speaking group. Second for the ten LGAs shown, *each* of the mentioned language groups exceeds 1,000 people, and some groups are much larger. Third, in addition to these six language groups in each LGA, there are many other smaller groups and communities. Except English in some areas , no one language group dominates.

Table 3.10   The ten LGAs in NSW with the highest proportions of people speaking a language other than English at home, 1996

LGAs	Population speaking a LOTE at home Per cent	Major language groups in order of size					
		First	Second	Third	Forth	Fifth	Sixth
(1) Fairfield	67.5	English	Vietnamese	Chinese	Italian	Spanish	Arabic
(2) Auburn	67.4	English	Chinese	Arabic	Vietnamese	Turkish	Croatian
(3) Canterbury	66.1	English	Arabic	Greek	Chinese	Korean	Italian
(4) Burwood	54.2	English	Chinese	Italian	Greek	Korean	Hindi
(5) Botany	52.4	English	Greek	Spanish	Chinese	Arabic	Italian
(6) Ashfield	52.0	English	Chinese	Italian	Greek	Korean	Hindi
(7) Marrickville	51.4	English	Greek	Cantonese	Italian	Vietnamese	Portuguese
(8) Strathfield	51.1	English	Chinese	Italian	Greek	Korean	Hindi
(9) Rockdale	49.9	English	Greek	Chinese	Macedonian	Arabic	Italian
(10) Bankstown	43.7	English	Arabic	Vietnamese	Greek	Chinese	Italian

Source: ABS Census, 1996. Customised tables.
Note: (1) Chinese comprises several languages, the largest group being Cantonese.
                  (2) All language groups shown had at least 1000 members in each LGA.

Conclusion.

The purpose of this statistical analysis is to point to the variation in, but also significant levels of, linguistic and cultural diversity in Australia. While this chapter has emphasised LGAs of higher diversity, even LGAs with smaller groups of NESB people will have particular needs, especially if such groups are isolated in terms of wider group social networks, for example, longer resident immigrant aged people in rural localities.

The use of census data is a useful indicator which councils themselves can use. Furthermore, the ABS can be approached by councils for specific cross-tabulations which are not part of the standard format. Such *customised tables* might include language by age and sex, or birthplace or religion by age or sex, or by income and family status. This data may then provide indicators of *multicultural need* in particular areas.

Chapter Four
ACCESS AND EQUITY

> Councils have a responsibility to acknowledge the multicultural nature of Australian society as we head towards 2000, and to play an important role in supporting all of its constituents in a fair and equitable distribution of resources and level of representation. (General Manager, rural NSW)

This chapter examines the different ways in which councils are making their services accessible to all members of the community. We have included data from Town Planning, Community Services, Engineering and Health departments. General Managers also present their views from the perspective of a "whole of council approach". The chapter draws together examples of best practice and suggestions for policy development and action. It concludes with a list of recommendations to assist councils to better serve the needs of everyone living and working in their communities.

In Chapter Two we discussed notions of access and equity (A&E). Councils are using their own interpretations of this term. One Sydney urban council acknowledged that multiculturalism "presents a challenge to deliver services in ways that are equitable and easily accessible to all residents". Nevertheless, it saw it had an ethical responsibility to go beyond employing specialist officers and supporting multicultural events and grants. It considered that a "holistic workplace change in culture" was necessary.

> It is about a new way of thinking and acting… it is about working from a social justice framework… Access is about providing all our citizens with the same opportunities to maximise quality of life objectives. Equity… is about recognising that although all citizens are meant to be equal in their rights and in the way they are treated by government, they are in fact very different in their needs, interests and values. Treating everybody the same simply perpetuates existing inequalities… intervention must provide appropriate rules, programs and service provision to combat barriers on social markers concerned with language, culture, race or religion, [and] gender, if we are to provide a socially just customer service commitment to our NESB community. (Liverpool City Council LEAPS business plan, 1998-99, 2)

Some of the councils surveyed have adopted this attitude to A&E. Others have not. And while only 17 per cent of General Managers who responded believed that multicultural policies and programs were essential, 43 per cent considered them moderately important. More metropolitan than non-metropolitan councils considered the programs essential (35 per cent compared with ten per cent) or moderately important (50 per cent of metropolitan respondents compared with 40 per cent of non-metropolitan respondents). Victoria, NSW and South Australia had the highest percentages of General Manager respondents who said that multicultural policies were either essential or moderately important (Victoria: 91.7%; NSW: 63.8%; South Australia: 61.4%). Twenty per cent of Queensland and 25 per cent of Western Australian General Managers believed the policies to be irrelevant. Those states also had the lowest percentages of respondents who thought the policies were essential (Queensland: 5.7 per cent; Western Australia: ten per cent).

In terms of understanding of A&E, there was a mixed picture. Community Services departments ranked themselves the most highly with 77.6 per cent having either an excellent (14 per cent) or good understanding. Town Planning and Health departments rated their knowledge of A&E as good at just under 60 per cent. Few of these departments considered that they had an excellent understanding (between one and two per cent). Engineering respondents were slightly lower with 51 per cent ranking their knowledge as good. Over 30 per cent of all departments, except Community Services, reported a poor understanding of A&E amongst their officers. Respondents from metropolitan and non-metropolitan LGAs reported similar levels of understanding (60 per cent of metropolitan councils and 56 per cent of non-metropolitan councils reported good levels). On a state by state basis, South Australia ranked its knowledge the highest (67.3 per cent either excellent or good) followed by Victoria and NSW (65.9 per cent and 62.9 per cent, respectively). Queensland and Western Australia ranked their knowledge of A&E as the lowest of all states (56.5 per cent and 56.4 per cent thought that they had a good or excellent knowledge of the policies).

Our survey revealed many examples of practice which suggested a strong commitment to A&E. As one respondent said,

> I believe local government is now greatly aware of the needs for multicultural policies and most councils have adopted relevant policies. (Community Services manager, rural NSW)

Local government has responded to the needs of indigenous and NESB communities in a variety of ways. These included multilingual services, training staff to be more sensitive to the needs of disparate communities, and researching and writing multicultural and indigenous policies. Local government has targeted unfair and iniquitous practices as well as getting community members to participate in decision making. Councils did not necessarily recognise these initiatives as aspects of A&E. In some ways the terms do not matter. What is of concern is the recognition of what they have been doing to assist their communities use the services and facilities to which they are entitled. Our survey provides a wealth of evidence that local government has adopted innovative and sensitive practices. It is in the sharing of this work that more councils will be better able to respond to the needs of their constituents.

> I think it is a useful exercise that will hopefully enable this council to gain an understanding of its performance in this area compared with other councils. (General Manager, rural South Australia)

In the questionnaire sent to councils we asked respondents to identify the ways in which they were trying to make services accessible and equitable. Blackwell (1994) provides a useful guide to practices of inclusion. These range from culturally sensitive employment programs to specific staff training, the widespread use of translation and interpreter services, communication strategies, and data gathering and review techniques. Our survey revealed that councils are making use of these initiatives, although a systematic approach is not evident. In reviewing the survey results, local government can learn from others and improve their own A&E practices.

Employment practices

The recruitment and training of staff is a key area in developing accessible and equitable service provision (Blackwell, 1994, 12). Local government cannot develop cultural sensitivity if it does not have appropriately skilled officers able to develop policies and practices that acknowledge community diversity. Of those councils surveyed, only a few had hired specialist personnel to deal with specific multicultural and diversity needs. Eleven per cent of all respondents had an A&E officer, with more in metropolitan councils (22.7 per cent) compared with non-metropolitan areas (6.3 per cent). On a state by state basis, 15.8 per cent of NSW councils which responded employed an A&E officer. This compares with 12.5 per cent of Victorian councils, 10.5 per cent of Queensland's, 7.3 per cent of Western Australia's and 7.1 per cent of Tasmania's. Interestingly, South Australia had the lowest rate of A&E officer employment (4.4 per cent of respondent councils), although it rated the importance of multicultural policies and its understanding of A&E relatively highly (see previous section).

Of those councils who responded to the questionnaire, only a few funded specialist positions such as disability workers, community development officers and ethnic and Aboriginal liaison personnel. There were however, council-wide attempts to expand the diversity of staff by providing a culturally aware and sensitive work environment. Eighty four per cent of the councils that responded had equal employment opportunity (EEO) policies. These aim to remove structural and attitudinal impediments to employment and to treat all employees fairly (Blackwell, 1994, 13). EEO tackles unfair or biased practices for all workers, as well as ensuring that management decisions are fair. It also encompasses policy and practices which recognise and nurture the diversity of staff who can then deliver the best possible service.

We asked councils about their employment practices and found a range of approaches. Eighteen per cent had instituted culturally sensitive leave requirements. Twenty two per cent recognised overseas qualifications and 13 per cent had affirmative action policies designed to advance the career development of indigenous and NESB officers.

> The Shire has a high Aboriginal population and this is reflected in the make up of the Council's workforce. Council has developed strong linkages with the local Aboriginal Land Council and has regular consultation between elders of the Lands Council and the Mayor, councillors and senior staff of Council. (General Manager, rural NSW)

Other levels of government funding were sometimes used to assist in the employment of culturally diverse groups.

> The Social Justice Strategy within Commonwealth Local Government Development Program enabled us to develop a regional program involving four councils and ATSIC in working together to improve local government services to the Aboriginal community. Local Government Aboriginal Employment Strategy enabled us to employ a Community Development Worker for three years. (Community Services manager, metropolitan NSW)

Some councils were proud that their workforce was representative of the local ethnic population and had a staff language register.

> Council has made a particular effort to employ indigenous staff in most of its activities, now at four per cent of the workforce. Staff from the major ethnic groups within the city are represented. (General Manager, metropolitan West Australia)

In some instances, customer service teams had bilingual staff or the assistance of language aides. Many councils worked closely with migrant resource and neighbourhood centres to enhance their sensitivity to the needs of different groups living in their regions.

In terms of a "whole of council approach", General Managers estimated that 25 per cent of staff were trained about A&E issues. There were slight variations across departmental boundaries with 33 per cent of Town Planning, 34 per cent of Health, 36 per cent of Community Services and 34 per cent of Engineering staff trained in this area. Respondents identified a range of activities including education in cross cultural communication, customer service courses and individually tailored programs to raise awareness levels of the needs of various ethnic and indigenous communities. Some training was done in-house and some by specialists and different government departments. There did not appear to be any institutionalised A&E training programs. Most were offered on an informal and "as needed" basis. This is problematic if local government is to adequately address A&E issues across the breadth of its service delivery. Nevertheless, General Managers identified definite successes in A&E training including the appointment of language aides and the establishment of clear procedures for translations and the use of interpreters. In relation to developing and building upon an understanding of A&E principles, informal, ad-hoc training is insufficient. Community Services staff had the best knowledge (77 per cent either excellent or good), followed by Town Planning and Health both with 59 per cent, and Engineering with 53 per cent. While this is a reasonable indication that A&E training programs were working, there were still many council employees who have a very poor understanding. Clearly this is an issue which requires attention.

Use of interpreting and related services

> …the lack of English is the greatest barrier to access to services and participation in the local community. (Blackwell, 1994, 27)

> It is important for Council to know [the] composition and languages of its local area so appropriate communication strategies are put in place and all residents have equal access to Council services. (Town Planner, metropolitan NSW)

Councils have a responsibility to ensure that they communicate to all residents about the services available to them. Blackwell asserts that the use of council resources, time and money can be maximised if there is adequate communication. "Duplication of effort, dissatisfaction and frustration result from misunderstanding due to a lack of information". (Blackwell, 1994, 27)

Resources are essential in developing and maintaining adequate and appropriate translation and interpreting services. Suitably qualified staff are also critical. We asked each council department if they had a specific budget allocation for translation and interpreting services. Only seven per cent of Town Planning and nine per cent of Health departments had such a budget. Community Services were better off (14 per cent have their own budgets) and Engineering was worse off with only three per cent. No doubt these different figures reflect the current perception of need and it may be that those councils without a specific budget can readily get funds if and when they need them. Nevertheless, a budget allocation indicates priority, and a recognition of need. Further, it gives each department some independence in allocating and spending funds.

Budget allocations reflect the low usage patterns of interpreting or translation services. Four per cent of Town Planners used the services once a week or more, three per cent once a month, 30 per cent rarely and 63 per cent never. Community Services had a higher rate of use with nine per cent using interpreter services once or more per week. Two per cent of Engineering and Health departments only called on interpreting services once or more a week.

Although there is a broad range of interpreting and translation services available, the different departments of councils used them most sparingly. This may reflect ignorance of some of the more innovative and unusual services as well as a perception that there is no need to translate documents or assist clients with verbal communication. The issue of whether there is a need or not reflects council attitudes towards inclusion and understandings of the level of diversity in the community. Use of different interpreting and translation services are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1   Percentage of council departments which use interpreting and translating services

Interpreting/ translating service	Departments that responded to the survey			
	Town Planning	Community Services	Health	Engineering/ Technical Services
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
On site interpreters	12	17	16	10
Language identification charts	3	7	5	4
Telephone interpreter service	11	24	16	10
Multilingual sign	13	2	19	12
Bilingual staff	24	29	24	26
Multilingual pamphlets	18	35	36	16
Accredited language aides	3	6	4	3
Multilingual letters	10	11	8	8
Dual handset phones at counters	2	4	3	1
Community notice boards	17	34	8	14

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism

Table 4.1 details the main interpreting and translation techniques used, however council officers also used other means to communicate. Several said that clients brought their own interpreter.

> No translation services have been required but when so it is usually done by a friend of [the] applicant or person requiring service. (Town Planner, rural South Australia)

> Multilingual pamphlets and posters are available at the front counter for general information. (Town Planner, metropolitan NSW)

 Bilingual volunteers were occasionally used as were other organisations including migrant resource centres and referral agencies.

Getting help from outside sources was an important aspect of developing a council's communication strategy. Information was gleaned from specific councils with high profile ethnic and/or indigenous populations. Respondents mentioned the assistance of voluntary regional organisations of councils and how this facilitated information sharing. Local government publications from the state and commonwealth also provided useful material. Nevertheless, multilingual material from outside sources was identified as important by only five per cent of Town Planning, 14 per cent of Health, eight per cent of Community Services and two per cent of Engineering departments. It is surprising that more survey respondents were not making use of resources already available. This indicates a serious gap in getting the message out to local government, no doubt also resulting in a duplication of effort as some councils develop their own policies and practices in isolation. Systems need to be put in place to enable local government to build on what is already available.

Councils which were using multilingual material from outside sources were getting assistance with communication in the following areas:

- Development control and planning processes

- Food handling for different ethnic restaurants

- Requirements under the food act, particularly food hygiene

- Immunisation

- General health

- Maternal and child health

- Home care for elderly residents

- Waste and recycling

- Swimming and surfing

- Tree preservation orders

- Rates notices.

There were some councils which continued to take a very hard and exclusionary line on providing translation and interpreter services. "Everyone living in Australia should be able to speak and read English. Those that can't should be educated" (Town Planner, rural South Australia). Given the extent of diversity across the nation, to say nothing of recent federal cuts to English as a second language programs, this is an unreasonable expectation and must result in barriers to service provision.

The adoption of a plain English policy for all of council's official correspondence, documents and regulations is an integral part of any broadbased communication strategy. The survey revealed that 61 per cent of Town Planning, 40 per cent of Community Services, 52 per cent of Health and 50 per cent of Engineering departments used plain English. Nevertheless, perceptions of plain English vary and some documents may unwittingly include jargon and technical language. This is something which needs further research as it has not been part of our investigation.

Expanding usage of council services

Some councils set targets for expanding usage levels of their programs by all community groups. Thirty per cent of Community Service departments did this, compared with 11 per cent of Health, four per cent of Town Planning and three per cent of Engineering. In some cases, specific cultural groups were targeted. Thirteen per cent of Town Planning departments did this, compared with 17 per cent of Health and eight per cent of Engineering. Community Services were asked to identify the different groups targeted with special programs or services. These are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2   Percentages of respondent Community Services departments which target specific groups with special programs and services

Group targeted	Per cent
Small or hidden ethnic groups	29
Indigenous women	24
Elderly indigenous people	22
NESB Women	25
Elderly NESB	32
Children in ethno-specific child care	14

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism

Our survey revealed a wealth of different ways in which councils try to reach specific cultural groups. Town Planners worked through the consultation process to specifically target different cultural groups. As one council planner stated, "In exhibiting planning related material we target the ethnic groups which would be affected and prepare translations or use language aides to ensure they have the opportunity to comment" (Town Planner, metropolitan NSW). Others targeted specific cultural groups (for example, indigenous people, gays, differently abled) if there was a development proposal which was judged to directly affect them. They also used special programs and officers, cultural or community networks, general customer service improvements in accessibility and in some cases, the development of cultural and economic policy statements. Consulting with indigenous communities was frequently done through Aboriginal liaison committees.

Many Health departments have been trying to increase immunisation rates through child care centres, schools and places of employment programs. All community groups have been targeted and in some cases, ethnic community workers assisted with increasing immunisation rates. Some departments undertook training in food handling for small businesses, focusing on specific ethnic groups. Rubbish removal and recycling were also areas of concern and one council used specially prepared pamphlets in community languages to help educate the community about waste reduction. An Environmental Health Department completed a public and environmental health management plan which set short and long term strategies dealing with program expansion. Different representatives from indigenous and NESB groups were invited to participate on technical advisory teams in an effort to expand council services and render them more culturally appropriate .

Community Services departments provided numerous suggestions for reaching different community groups. Many ideas are innovative and demonstrate considerable levels of creativity which will encourage other councils currently struggling with communicating across their communities. Strictly speaking some examples are related to community relations as much as A&E, but we have decided to list them here as they were identified as one package by the respondents.

Staff: Increasingly, councils employed specialist officers who could research, understand and target disadvantaged and marginalised community groups. Examples included indigenous workers such as Aboriginal community development officers, Aboriginal community workers, Aboriginal arts officers;

workers with particular religious affiliations and community and welfare officers who target NESB, ATSI, women, aged, disabled and children. Some councils reported that they provided part-time staff to work in the community as well as with different organisations such as migrant resource centres. Survey respondents also cited examples of where they had funded training for different service providers to help raise levels of cultural awareness.

Policy and plans: Development of LEAPS plans and A&E plans, publishing profiles on local NESB and ATSI communities; regular needs assessment to identify appropriate services.

NESB programs: Organising meetings of ethnic groups was very commonly cited; development of ethno-specific carers groups; "Home Language Program"; working with migrant workers from other levels of government; targeting specific groups for access to facilities; supporting ethno-specific associations; catering to women's needs for child care, crafts, meals on wheels; ethnic community respite programs; promoting facilities for use by emerging ethnic groups; anti-drug program for the Vietnamese community; health education for specific ethnic groups; literacy and conversation classes; social security publications in other languages; ethno-specific women's health days; buddy program for NESB women.

ATSI programs and reconciliation: Aboriginal women's safe house; Aboriginal community development project designed to build bridges between the indigenous community and local government, get indigenous input into planning, and ensure greater recognition of Aboriginal identity; establishment of an Aboriginal Resource Centre; helping local indigenous groups get funding for written and oral history and for landscaping traditional land; developing programs to identify indigenous groups and needs; establishment of indigenous specific aged service employing indigenous staff; assistance for the formation of indigenous women's groups.

Child care and youth: Ethno-specific youth development programs; anti-bias curriculum project for child care centres; multicultural children's services including multicultural and bi-lingual workers at child care centres; special activities for NESB in youth festivals; ensuring access to child care for recent migrants; child care centres offering different community languages; youth outreach programs targeting ethno-specific groups.

Senior Citizens: Fostering NESB groups in senior citizen activities and centres; special recreational activities for NESB elderly; ethno-specific Meals on Wheels; special activities for NESB at senior citizen festivals; developing materials and resources to attract NESB to aged services; setting substantial targets for NESB use of "aged care packages"; community bus for isolated aged people to access services and participate in community activities.

Library: Multicultural library services which included providing books and other resources in a variety of community languages; multicultural information services at library.

Support for outside agencies and groups: Helping ethnic communities get funding for cultural events; financial and other support for local migrant resource centres; support for refugees, and torture and trauma victims involving accommodation, grants, health education; support for neighbourhood houses.

Consultation, networking and committees: Establishment of regular community consultative committees on ATSI and NESB issues; local forums on sensitive issues; regular informal contact with Aboriginal organisations and elders; promoting involvement of indigenous and NESB people in developing services and as management committee members once services and programs are up and running.

Community arts and displays: Cultural mapping; flag flying projects; multicultural banners; ethnic oral history projects.

Festivals and forums: Targeting key members of major cultural groups including religious organisations to hold and/or take part in festivals and forums; public meetings and workshops on how to get more NESB involvement.

Reconciliation: Development of an indigenous ACCORD.

Publications: Videos about local government (and other issues) in community languages; council newsletters in community languages.

Accessing local ethnic media: Radio advertisements in community languages.

Engineering departments have also developed inclusionary practices by targeting specific groups. They reported consultations, networking and establishing special committees to help officers gain the views of ATSI and NESB. Brochures were produced in community languages to inform local residents of the availability of council services and how to access them.

Road safety is an area of particular concern to engineers. Councils reported some innovative practices such as targeting certain language communities for increased child restraint use in vehicles. Traffic and parking proposals were sometimes advertised in other languages. One council initiated a "Koori wise" road safety program. Children and young people were also targeted in an effort to reduce pedestrian and bicycle accidents.

Engineering departments have employed a large number of people in a variety of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled positions. One council reported, "We try to provide an environment which encourages indigenous people to apply for positions" (Engineer, rural NSW). There was support for festival organisation, and recreational facilities have been equipped with facilities which cater for the needs of different groups.

Information gathering techniques

Data collection, as part and parcel of a systematic research program, is the cornerstone of local government policy development and implementation. Not only does a council have to know who makes up its community, it needs to closely monitor service usage levels. In relation to A&E, Blackwell states,

> …knowledge of the wider community is, of course, essential to proper planning, monitoring and targeting of Council programs and services, An important step in identifying barriers to access is to recognise that there may be cultural differences between the policy developer / service provided and the target population. Data of this nature can assist Council to better target particular groups or "tap" new markets… the collection of service user statistics is essential to any assessment of the extent to which various groups are participating:
>
> - How well is the service penetrating its market?
> - Are Council's services and programs reaching the different cultural and linguistic groups on an equitable basis? (that is, are their participation levels commensurate with their representation in the local community?) (Blackwell, 1994, 49)

We asked councils about their use of different techniques to assess diversity levels and gain insights into alternative perspectives on local issues. We also examined their review mechanisms.

As well as the many traditional research and data collection techniques, councils used a variety of formal mechanisms to gather alternative perspectives on local issues. These included liaison officers (39 per cent of councils), forums (59 per cent), workshops (54 per cent) and advisory / consultative committees (73 per cent).

Sixty four per cent of respondent councils used the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) "Basic Community Profiles" from the Census when assessing the nature and delivery of services. Forty four per cent used the ABS' "Expanded Community Profiles". These provide detailed statistical data on different ethnic groups in an area, facilitating a council's awareness and understanding of its population's diversity.

Directories of religious and ethnic community organisations were valuable for identifying particular community representatives. Thirty four per cent of Town Planning, 34 per cent of Community Services and 31 per cent of Health departments reported using such directories. A&E implementation guides (for example, Blackwell, 1994) were also helpful in giving councils ideas about inclusionary

practices and policy development. Only seven per cent of Town Planning, nine per cent of Health and nine per cent of Engineering departments said that they had used this or similar publications. Community Services departments had a higher usage level of 30 per cent. It may be that these guides are only sent to one council department and not shared around. Community Services can do a lot to educate officers across council departments about the existence and relevance of such resources. This requires a commitment to greater inter-departmental cooperation and a recognition of the importance of Community Services departments within local government.

Reviews of whether programs to expand usage are working are essential. Regular reviews of who uses department services by ethnicity were only carried out by two per cent of Town Planning and three per cent of Engineering departments. Community Services and Health were doing better, with 17 per cent and 11 per cent respectively indicating that they conducted regular reviews. We asked for specific details of the review process and found a mix of informal and formal mechanisms. Informal observations made by staff and information from telephone enquires and complaints were useful because they added to the anecdotal knowledge about an area, its population diversity and the adequacy of service provision. However, formal, regular review procedures need to be part of council practice. Without a systemic process it is very difficult to measure what is really happening, or to argue for the allocation of additional resources. Some councils have institutionalised review mechanisms which involved examining and reporting on census data, regular user needs surveys, customer feedback and collecting client statistics. Surveys were used to target a specific facility (for example, open space) or service (for example, Meals on Wheels). In some cases, an issue was examined in relation to the needs of different cultural groups (for example, domestic violence). And some councils noted the number of specific users of a facility (for example, ethnic or indigenous groups).

Other review processes displayed a degree of innovation and creativity. There is a need, however, for a "whole of council" approach so that service delivery can be co-ordinated and understandings of what is happening in the community shared across council departments.

As with other A&E practices, Community Services departments showed a high level of commitment to regular reviews. They talked about collecting data from the following sources:

Libraries: Patrons when registering noted the language they speak at home.

Receptionists: Numbers of visitors to the department were recorded.

Enrolment forms: Information was requested about country of birth and language spoken at home at libraries, child care centres, pre-schools, disability, meals and home nursing services.

Interpreter services sheets: These had to be filled out by staff dealing with NESB enquires and were collated by specialist staff.

Funding bodies: They required specific data about users to be collected.

As well as these sources of information, officers with responsibility for ethnicity and/or indigenous programs had their own review schedules. They worked in conjunction with other departments formulating strategies for gathering information about people using services. Community consultations can target NESB groups in order to review usage, needs and problems.

Opening up council services and processes to the community

Participation techniques are now widely used in local government. However, just because a council asks people for their views on plans, policies, program design and development proposals, there is no guarantee that opinions are carefully considered and incorporated into the decision making process. Nor can we be sure that all community groups feel comfortable using the participation techniques offered by many councils. The rhetoric of participation is sometimes used without special commitment to empowering the community (Filippeli, 1989). This results in a frustrating and alienating process. Our survey has not been able to tease this out (but see Bell, 1998). Participation and consultation are relatively recent foci in A&E. It is for this reason that we did not ask a lot of questions about what councils were doing in this area. We will be following this up in the next phase of our research. Nevertheless, we found a high level of use of various participation techniques. These are illustrated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3   Percentage of council departments which used consultation and participation techniques

| Technique used | Departments that responded to the survey | | | |
| | Town Planning | Community Services | Health | Engineering/ Technical Services |
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Publications	84	84	80	73
Public meeting	92	89	80	86
Advertising	92	89	88	88
Research / project officer	61	64	51	48
Polling / survey	64	74	62	56
Focus group / workshop	83	77	64	59
Public inquiry	52	49	54	49
Consultative committee	74	82	67	75
Discussion paper	69	65	57	54
Advisory committee	77	83	71	74
Seminar / conference	54	48	42	29

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism

We also found that councils use a number of different sites or representatives to assist them in communicating with different cultural groups (Table 4.4). The wide ranging nature of these sites indicates an awareness that councils need to go outside the traditional information sharing modes in order to reach everyone in the community. Some of the sites and representatives are used more than others (as shown in the table), but in reporting on usage levels, councils can learn from each other and instigate their own broader information sharing processes.

Table 4.4   Percentages of council departments which send information about new policies and programs to specified sites/representatives

| Site or representative | Departments that responded to the survey | | | |
| | Town Planning | Community Services | Health | Engineering/ Technical Services |
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Council inquiry counter	98	97	98	96
Social and sporting clubs	35	52	43	40
Libraries	90	92	86	80
Religious centres	15	24	17	8
Early childhood centres	14	56	51	12
Religious schools	9	23	20	7
Community centres	51	81	66	38
Ethnic day schools	3	6	12	3
Child care centres	14	58	51	12
Ethnic print media	6	19	11	2
Post offices / banks	28	13	20	17
Ethnic radio	4	18	10	4
Health centres	20	60	63	13
Ethnic organisations	12	36	17	7
Citizenship ceremonies	10	25	15	11
Migrant resource centre	7	31	14	5
ATSIC regional council office; Aboriginal lands council; Aboriginal legal service	25	33	20	12
Health care professionals serving indigenous or NESB people	15	49	35	8

| English classes | 4 | 11 | 3 | 3 |

Council meetings are where formal decisions are made and it is important that the community is encouraged to participate at this level. There are councils which *actively* encourage indigenous people (22 per cent) and NESB groups (18 per cent) to attend council meetings.

Most General Managers stated that "all residents are welcome to attend council meetings". Of the councils which made specific efforts to include ATSI and NESB groups at council meetings, strategies included personally approaching and inviting members of these communities to participate. Councils can also encourage NESB and ATSI individuals to stand for election. Having ATSI and NESB councillors encourages greater participation of these groups. Information about council meetings is distributed through the ethnic media and special efforts may be made if the issue to be discussed and voted on is particularly culturally sensitive.

Success of A&E programs

We asked councils to report on the success of their A&E programs. A significant proportion of General Managers (66 per cent of those who responded) estimated that they were servicing an expanding pool of residents. In terms of overcoming barriers faced by indigenous people in accessing council services, only five per cent of respondents believed that there have been significant improvements. Thirty one per cent reported some improvement, but a total of 48 per cent could see no change. In relation to barriers faced by NESB communities, four per cent of councils made significant improvements, 22 per cent some improvement, and 58 per cent believed that there had been no change.

The different council departments surveyed were asked to estimate the level of cultural sensitivity and flexibility of their service provision. They painted a good picture. Community Services and Town Planning had the best image to relate, with 76 per cent reporting that they had either excellent or good culturally sensitive and flexible service provision. There were similarly high rates for Engineering (76 per cent) and Health (75 per cent). General Managers said that for their "whole of council" response, 64 per cent were doing a good job. While this figure is slightly lower than those from the individual departments, it is nonetheless quite impressive. An average of 25 per cent said that their response was poor, which indicates room for improvement given the widespread nature of diversity across councils.

In contrast to the figures presented above, frequent contact between councils and different cultural advocacy groups was limited. Table 4.5 illustrates this finding, suggesting that frequent contact needs to be much more widespread. Formal mechanisms can contribute here and once in place, will lead to much greater contact between councils and different community groups, thus ensuring a systematic coverage of all sectors of the community.

Table 4.5   Percentage of respondent councils which have frequent contact with specified cultural advocacy groups.

Cultural advocacy groups	Per cent of councils
Ethnic organisations	22
Cultural associations	33
Grant in aid workers	15
Religious leaders	21
Migrant resource centre	16
ATSI Regional Council/ Aboriginal Lands Council/ Aboriginal Legal Service	25

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism

A persuasive argument for the implementation of an appropriate A&E program is to consider the benefits to local governments and their communities. Blackwell (1994, 6) has summarised the benefits of A&E as follows:

- Creates a community that is fairly resourced at the local government level

- Creates a positive public image

- Ensures that community members are aware of council services, functions and procedures

- Increases community participation

- Enhances representation in council elections, decision making and service provision

- Ensures greater use of council facilities and services

- Minimises racial tensions by enhancing inter-group relations

- Encourages greater compliance with council regulations

- Meets legal requirements for EEO policies which, in turn, contributes to a more harmonious workplace

- Provides better returns for the investment of ratepayers' dollars

- Encourages the equitable distribution of council resources across the entire community

- Encourages more effective use of the community's skills, talents and experiences

- Encourages positive cooperation between councils and other spheres of government.

In articulating these benefits, council officers can argue for adequate resourcing of A&E policy development and implementation. Examples of best practice are also useful as our survey attests. We asked councils to nominate examples of successful A&E initiatives. An analysis of the responses shows that they can be applied across different situations. The examples are summarised below.

Policy and plans: Joining with neighbouring councils to win funding from appropriate state government departments for projects that improve communication between local government and different cultural communities (there were a variety of programs which encouraged cross government support in this area); using interdepartmental models to develop and implement consultation and participation programs with NESB and indigenous groups; ethnic access policy; customer service policy; council policies in plain English; promotion within council of an understanding of service and access to indigenous and NESB communities.

Consultation, networking and committees: Working in conjunction with specialist committees such as Aboriginal liaison and NESB consultative committees; facilitating the formation of indigenous consultative and advisory committees; Regular consultations and meetings with NESB and indigenous communities; Establishment of a "Cultural Strategic Committee with representatives from NESB groups; Multicultural Consultative Forum; Examining access and mobility issues for the whole community as well as special needs of marginalised groups; Establishment of committees with a special needs focus (such as Community Services for NESB and indigenous communities); Improved community consultation and feedback programs; Involvement of representatives of Christian and non-Christian religious groups on council committees. "

NESB programs: Systemic use of state government interpreter and translation services; Considering how issues such as disability and NESB can be addressed (there are many other combinations of barriers which can be examined with affected communities); Working with community advocacy agencies (for example, migrant resource centres) to win funding for special programs which target areas of need and particular barriers faced by NESB and indigenous groups; Publicising new council initiatives, such as recycling programs, in community languages; Providing ethno-specific meals on wheels; Ensuring that interpreters are available for council and community meetings and telephone communications with different community groups.

ATSI programs and reconciliation: Council active and supportive recognition of ATSI Week; Involvement of council in reconciliation programs focussing on breaking down barriers; Support for Aboriginal history of local area; Improving liaison with indigenous community to assist with health and cultural programs; frequent communication with Aboriginal Elders.

Child care and youth: Multicultural programming in children's services.

Senior citizens: Aged care programs targeting NESB; Improved access to senior citizens centres for NESB.

Library: A variety of multicultural library services including community language collections and accredited translator on staff.

Support: Councils support Community Services and cultural advocacy groups by providing funding for specific projects, and in-kind services and facilities.

Community arts, festivals and forums: Council involvement in local cultural networks; Support for community festivals, multicultural events and civic forums; Encouraging active participation by indigenous people in cultural events and community centre programs; Providing a multicultural focus

in community events; Establishment of an art gallery and community arts program; Support for an Arabic women's writing program; Information session on council elections for NESB groups.

Mass media: Production of a council video translated into different languages; Multi-lingual council information brochures; Translations of council documents; Improvement of public access to, and understanding of council meetings (information sessions for different cultural groups - this can be extended to older people, children, women); Improved signage with use of community languages and international symbols; Advertising the availability of interpreting and translation services.

Conclusion

> We have seen the effectiveness of such a program even after a year, as local government is the closest government to the people. (General Manager, metropolitan West Australia)

> Increased awareness though not necessarily a clear picture. (Town Planner, rural Victoria)

> This council does not have a large ethnic population. However, we do have a very comprehensive social plan which includes ethnic employment targets and also [our] EEO plan has similar requirements. (Engineer, metropolitan NSW)

This chapter has presented the results of our survey in relation to A&E initiatives. As well as giving insights into how councils are instituting policies that are inclusive of diverse groups, we have highlighted areas of best practice. At this point there are a number of general recommendations which can be made to assist councils to better serve the needs of everyone living and working in their communities.

- Systematic and formal staff training programs are required to enhance the cultural sensitivity and responsiveness of council officers. Such training must be provided across all departments if councils are to improve their general understanding of A&E issues.
- Specific budget allocations are required for enhancing the accessibility of council services for NESB and ATSI groups. Costs are not necessarily high, as some respondent councils have indicated, however having a budget allocation denotes a degree of priority as well as giving individual departments autonomy in dealing with the issues. Money can be used in creative and innovative ways as the examples of best practice presented here attest.
- Resource sharing is an important way of enhancing local government's A&E policies and practices. There are three levels of resource sharing that could be improved - inter departmental, from council to council and from the other levels of government to councils. Both state and federal government departments have produced reports which can assist, as well as being in a position to provide guidance about possible funding sources. Councils themselves have written a

plethora of policies and instigated A&E practices which can help others. Within a council, there needs to be a system of resource sharing so that all departments can access appropriate material.

- Rather than relying on targeting groups which may be affected by a particular policy, more inclusionary participation techniques need to be considered. This is important because it is not always possible to know in advance who will be affected by, or interested in a council policy or decision.

- Councils need to institute regular and systematised assessment of the needs of diverse communities and whether they are being met. Specifically, it is essential to monitor changes in who makes up the community, whether all groups are able to access the services they require and to assess how services can be made more accessible and appropriate.

- Councils have a responsibility to take on an educative role in the broader community to enhance levels of tolerance and understanding. This can be done in a number of ways using processes which are already in place. Participation programs, council meetings, festivals, forums and information sharing activities all present excellent possibilities.

- Our survey has discovered a great array of excellent work emanating from Community Services departments. Given their high levels of understanding and skills in policy development and equitable service delivery, Community Services staff should be seen as a resource to assist the rest of council in this area. Not only can they be called upon to help with providing information about the nature of diverse communities in the municipality, they could train other officers in understanding cultural diversity. This would capitalise on local knowledge rather than bringing in outside consultants.

There is a need to lobby different levels of government for funding of multicultural and indigenous programs. Better communication with Departments of Local Government to access opportunities for funding and other forms of support will greatly assist here.

- The establishment of good communication networks is the cornerstone of effective cultural diversity awareness policy and practice. These networks need to be set in place and nurtured formally and informally within councils, between council and the local community (individuals, cultural advocacy groups and community leaders) and finally, between council and the different levels of government. This will go a long way to ensuring that diverse community groups have equitable access to local government services and facilities, as well as opportunities to participate in decision making.

Chapter Five

INTER-COMMUNAL RELATIONS AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION

Council General Managers and department heads were asked to rate the cultural sensitivity and flexibility of their service provision. Table 5.1 reveals that most departments that responded considered that their reactions to diversity had been good. Heads of Community Services departments were the most confident of their service delivery, with ten per cent of respondents claiming that their response to diversity had been excellent.

Table 5.1   Percentage of council department's self rating of cultural sensitivity & flexibility of service provisions

Department	Departments that responded to the survey				Total
	Excellent	Good	Poor	Very Poor	
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
General Manager	7.4	65.1	23.7	3.7	100
Town Planning	7.2	71.1	18.5	3.2	100
Community Services	9.7	71.7	17.3	1.3	100
Health	7.6	67.2	23.7	1.5	100
Engineering/Technical Services	7.3	69.1	21.5	2.0	100
All departments *	8.0	69.7	20.0	2.0	100

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism
Note: * excludes General Manager responses

In total, 70 per cent of department heads argued that the degree of cultural sensitivity in their service provision was good, and a further 8 per cent claimed excellence (Table 5.1). Respondents from rural localities differed very little from those in urban areas in this self assessment, and there was no significant variation by state.

Heads of departments were asked to rate the degree of understanding which their staff had of the national Community Relations Strategy (CRS) (see Chapter Two). Overall the level of knowledge of community relations policies was very low. According to those who responded, officers of local government had a poor (60.1 per cent) or very poor (19.9 per cent) understanding of the principles of CRS. When compared to local government officer understanding of A&E policy this figure is dramatically low. More than three-quarters of councils officers were considered by their department heads to have a good or better understanding of access and equity (A&E) policy (see Chapter Four). Officers from Community Services departments had by far the better grasp of community relations policies (Table 5.2), although not even a third were considered to have a good or better understanding. However, over 80 per cent of officers from Health, Town Planning and Engineering Services departments had a poor or very poor grasp of community relations policy. This represents a concentration of this expertise in just one area of council. The general level of officer comprehension of community relations policy also varied across the states of Australia, with highest level of competence (good or excellent) in NSW (22.2 per cent) and Western Australia (22 per cent), followed

by South Australia (19.4 per cent), Victoria (19.3 per cent) and Tasmania (10.3 per cent). However, the general dearth of knowledge of community relations policy in local government must be a concern.

Table 5.2   Percentage of council department's rating of their own officer's understanding of community relations policies

Department	Departments that responded to the survey				Total
	Excellent	Good	Poor	Very Poor	
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Town Planning	0.8	18.8	58.3	22.1	100
Community Services	2.0	28.7	55.9	13.4	100
Health	1.5	15.5	64.0	18.9	100
Engineering/Technical Services	0.0	12.2	62.4	25.5	100
All departments	1.1	18.7	60.2	19.9	100

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism

Awareness of local cultural diversity

Knowledge of local non-Anglo-Celtic culture

General Managers were asked whether their council had undertaken programs to improve community understanding of local indigenous groups and other local non-Anglo cultures. Only 31 per cent of the respondents were able to answer yes for indigenous groups and even less (23 per cent) for other non-Anglo cultures. Table 5.3 reveals that metropolitan councils had a much more impressive record of instituting programs to expand community understanding of local non-Anglo cultures.

Table 5.3   Percentage of metropolitan and non-metropolitan councils which have implemented specified programs and initiatives to improve community relations

Programs	Councils that responded to the survey		
	Metropolitan councils	Non-Metropolitan councils	All councils
	Per cent Yes	Per cent Yes	Per cent Yes
Programs to improve wider community understanding of:			
Indigenous Culture	45.9	24.0	31.1
Other non-Anglo Cultures	56.6	9.2	23.0
Programs to improve council officer understanding of:			
Indigenous Culture	30.7	19.6	23.4
Other non-Anglo Cultures	40.3	5.5	15.9
Examined local community attitudes on ethnic relations or tolerance	21.3	3.8	8.9
Has an Anti Racism Policy	31.6	28.4	28.5

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism
Note: Response from General Managers

Only 23.4 per cent of councils reported they had instituted policies for improving council officer awareness of local indigenous culture, and only 15.9 per cent of respondents had programs to expand awareness of other non-Anglo-Celtic cultures. Once again non-metropolitan councils had a poorer record of expanding awareness of local non-Anglo-Celtic cultures, this time among their own staff.

Somewhat surprisingly, councils have generally made a lesser effort to expand their own officers' awareness and understanding of local non-Anglo-Celtic cultures than they have regarding expanding awareness among the communities they serve (Table 5.3).

Knowledge of local cultural diversity

Forty-two per cent of Community Services department heads reported that they had instituted programs aimed at raising community awareness of local cultural diversity. This represents at least 105 councils in Australia. Broadly, two-thirds of urban councils had instituted such policies (65.5 per cent), whereas only one-third of rural areas had done so (28.5 per cent).   Councils in NSW (49.5 per cent) and Victoria (50 per cent) had more impressive records of promoting local cultural diversity. Queensland councils were not quite as active (42.4 per cent), and only a third of Western and South Australian councils had instituted these forms of community relations program.

Most of the reported programs to expand awareness of local cultural diversity took the form of cultural festivals, fairs and arts projects. These were by far the most often mentioned form of community relations initiative.   Around 76 General Managers and over 100 Heads of Community Services provided details of all the types of major community relations initiatives with which their council had been involved. Most of these programs took the form of information provision, to a presumed Anglo-Celtic "mainstream", about local non-Anglo cultures or on the extent and breadth of diversity in the locality. These "information provision" forms of community relations programs included community arts displays, festivals, multicultural days, fiestas and food fairs. These types of initiative are discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Local inter-communal relations

Only nine per cent (24 cases) of the General Managers who responded to the survey reported that they had examined local community attitudes on ethnic relations or tolerance of religious and linguistic difference (Table 5.3). There was a marked urban/rural distinction among the councils which had carried out such work. Only 3.8 per cent of councils in non-metropolitan areas had demonstrated an interest in the state of local inter-communal relations, whereas 21.3 per cent of urban localities had done so (Table 5.3). Instances of rural areas taking such an interest often related to local government or local police relations with indigenous communities. A shire council near the border of NSW and Victoria had participated with academics from Charles Sturt University in a study on local government relations with local indigenous people.

Experiences of inter-ethnic discord

Thirty-six General Managers reported that there had been serious incidents of inter-communal tension in their localities during the previous five years. Twenty of those respondents remarked that their council had been involved. Indeed 22 Heads of Community Services also remarked that their

department had developed strategies to deal with outbreaks of local ethnic discord. Some of these had been associated with one-off occurrences such as a National Action rally or "riots" which expanded from incidents which had occurred between police and the public at cultural events.

Forms of inter-communal tension which were reported by General Managers included: verbal abuse of ethnic minorities; vandalising of religious landscapes; rallies; letters of complaint to council about neighbourhood change and the associated in-migration of "different" cultural groups; crime linked to youth from minority ethnic groups; inter-cultural feuds; and intra-cultural clashes. Examples of inter-communal discord as reported by General Managers were: Anti-Asian rally countered by pro-immigration rally, confrontationist but with police help non-violent (metropolitan South Australia); letters to CEO complaining about Chinese moving into area, advertising in Chinese in local paper (metropolitan Victoria); Council sponsored multicultural festival in shopping centre developed into clash between two ethnic groups, called police (metropolitan Victoria); some violent incidents between Croatians and Serbians at local sporting events (metropolitan West Australia); Juvenile crime linked back to Aboriginal problem with parents not looking after their children (rural West Australia); Native Title claims cause conflict (rural Tasmania); Many long term and older residents do not welcome recent increases in Hong Kong and Chinese population which may be due in part to Asian stereotyping (metropolitan NSW).

The survey responses quoted above reveal a certain level of prejudice in the perceptions of some General Managers, such as Native Title being seen as an "indigenous cause of discord" only (see Chapter Seven). The quotes do however reveal the everyday nature of the inter-communal tensions which exist everywhere.

Responses to inter-communal discord

As already mentioned 36 General Managers reported serious inter-communal discord in the past five years. Thirty-three respondents expressed concern that these instances of discord had created negative images of their locality. Indeed, some councils had adopted strategies to counteract what they considered to be sensationalist and damaging portrayals of their communities. These symbolic defences of place included strategies such as: attempted countering of negative image of Turkish migrants with community festivals (metropolitan Victoria); negative media image of [local] Vietnamese as linked to drugs, crime, gangs, attempt to counteract with community input and public relations video (metropolitan NSW); Media have sensationalised racial tension to point where Council has banned out of town press and complained to Journalists' Association (rural South Australia); Perceived high Aboriginal crime rate, appointed Community Development Officer and established co-ordinating committee of state agencies (rural West Australia); crime and media sensationalism damaging image but Council promoting tourism with outback themes including indigenous culture and history (rural NSW).

Other strategies for dealing with inter-communal tensions included the establishment of co-ordination, mediation and reconciliation committees between local institutions (council, police, social welfare) and local communities (Aboriginal Land Councils, Migrant Resource Centres, other cultural associations).

Only two per cent of General Managers reported that their council had developed official strategies to deal with local outbreaks of ethnic or religious discord (Table 5.5). Nonetheless, 28.5 per cent of councils did have anti-racism policies (Table 5.3). However, it is not clear whether these anti-racism policies were confined to staff relations within council as opposed to being programs intended at reducing racism in the local community. Slightly more urban councils had anti-racism policies, than did non-metropolitan local government areas (LGAs) (Table 5.3). Western Australian councils were slightly more likely to have instituted anti-racism policies (37.5 per cent) than councils in NSW (32.7 per cent) and Victoria (34.8 per cent). Only one-fifth of General Managers who responded from Queensland and South Australia replied that anti-racism policies had been developed, and none of the 12 respondent councils from Tasmania had such policies.

General Managers were asked to rate the success of council in improving the local community relations environment in the last five years. Only 19.5 per cent of respondents felt able to claim they had helped overcome mistrust between ethnic groups (Table 5.4). General Managers judged that their councils had more success at improving relations between ethnic minorities and council officers (28 per cent). Over forty per cent of respondents considered that their councils had enhanced local cultural maintenance and further valorised local cultural diversity (Table 5.4). Councils generally demonstrated more success at information provision and cultural festivals than at grappling with ethnic discord. Nonetheless, the celebration of cultural diversity, and support for the maintenance of cultural differences (see last section of Chapter), are legitimate community relations strategies.

Table 5.4   Percentages of councils' self rating of their impact on improving local community relations, 1991-1996

Inter-communal relations	Significantly Improved	Improved	No Change	Worse	Not Sure/ No Program
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Mistrust between ethnic groups	1.5	18.0	56.4	0.0	24.1
Mistrust between ethnic minorities and council	2.3	25.4	51.1	0.0	21.2
Celebration of local cultural diversity	10.1	32.2	40.1	0.0	17.6
Local cultural maintenance	7.2	34.0	42.3	0.0	16.6

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism
Note: Response from General Managers

Community fairs and festivals are important and effective long-term responses to everyday intolerances and prejudices. However, serious incidents of inter-communal discord as well as pervasive racism require remedial effort. It is worrying that so few of those localities which reported recent and serious incidents of inter-communal tensions have instituted more pro-active community relations policies. Only 27.8 per cent of these councils had undertaken an examination of community attitudes to ethnic relations and intolerance. Just over a third had instituted anti-racism policies, and as few as 8.3 per cent had developed official strategies to deal with local inter-communal discord (Table 5.5). These statistics are more alarming when expressed the other way. Ninety-two per cent of those councils which had experienced serious incidents of ethnic or religious prejudice had not officially responded, and over a third had not instituted an anti-racism policy or critically examined local community relations.

Table 5.5   Reported council incidents of inter-communal tension by the percentage of councils which had instigated selected responses to these incidents.

	Examined local inter-communal relations	Official strategy to deal with ethnic prejudice	Anti-racism policy
Serious Incident of inter-communal tension	**Per cent**	**Per cent**	**Per cent**
Yes	27.8	8.3	36.1
No	6.1	1.0	27.2
Instigation of selected responses by all responding councils	**8.9**	**2.1**	**28.5**

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism
Note: Response from General Managers

Major community relations initiatives

Community relations initiatives of local government included the festivals and events discussed earlier as well as cultural charters, cross-cultural training for staff, reconciliation statements and accords, cultural development grants, support for community arts, oral history projects and cultural mapping exercises. Seventy-six General Managers provided detailed examples of major initiatives in these areas. Just over half of these General Managers were from rural localities, in which cultural events involving local indigenous people were prominent. However, some also made reference to cultural events of a non-Anglo and non-indigenous nature.

> Carnivale has been very successful, such that it will now become an annual event. A survey of ethno-specific groups to provide outreach services in the area was well received ... the response was great (General Manager, rural NSW).

> Council flies the Aboriginal flag at council offices [and elsewhere] permanently alongside Australian flags. Hard to judge success, but believe this action reflects wishes of the majority of the population (General Manager, rural Tasmania).

Annual local festival involving broad cross section of community, approximately 10,000 people attend annually ... Museum and art gallery (Council operated) regularly works with and exhibits work of ethnic and indigenous artists (General Manager, rural Tasmania).

General Managers from metropolitan areas rarely made reference to community relations activities which included indigenous people or indigenous cultures. Fiestas and festivals were once again the main form of initiative which was reported. These were often associated with Australia Day, NIADOC week and local hallmark periods like a pre-harvest or "Orange Blossom" festival.

Multicultural Day scheduled for November this year - will probably be an annual event. More involvement at Australia Day celebrations (General Manager, metropolitan NSW).

Multicultural festivals, conversational English lessons, ethnic meals on wheels, NESB youth "express your culture" project, flag flying project, multicultural banners, ethnic oral history project, police migrant liaison project. All of these have been extremely successful (General Manager , metropolitan West Australia).

Aims at improving communication between council officers and persons of NESB. Joint [local councils] community relations project in 1992/93 by Department of Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, designed to improve communication between Council and NESB communities. Resulted in establishment of Ethnic Consultative Committee. (General Manager, metropolitan NSW)

Heads of Community Services departments were able to detail many more examples of local community relations projects than were the General Managers. One-hundred-and-seven lists of examples of major community relations projects were provided from non-metropolitan areas, and 109 from metropolitan councils. Because of the higher absolute survey response from non-metropolitan areas, this indicates that urban councils are more likely to be active in local community relations than are rural areas. As with the General Managers reports, non-metropolitan areas had many projects which embraced local indigenous culture, such as the sponsoring of art or cuisine events and the flying of the Aboriginal flag.

Community arts - one of the objectives of the community arts festival was to seek out minority national communities and encourage participation by dance programmes and food stalls. Art Gallery - Aboriginal artists commissioned to undertake workshops with local Aboriginal community to prepare works for exhibition by and about community (Community Services manager, rural NSW).

> [Our] Arts Centre has presented and planned a number of multicultural activities/ exhibitions, eg Global Festival Seasons, Christmas from different cultural emphasis, Artist in Residence from the Philippines, Aboriginal art exhibitions (Community Services manager, rural Queensland).

The heads of Community Services also outlined projects which embraced other non-Anglo-Celtic cultures, including a NSW council's support for the "Turkish Delight Night". Another council had supported a "Celtic festival". Rural initiatives also included some very comprehensive packages of community relations:

> Council has implemented an Indigenous Cultural Awareness Programme which has included (1) Training for approximately 50% of all staff; (2) Koori Information Days; (3) Establishment of an Aboriginal Advisory Committee; (4) Indigenous programming in child care centres auspiced by Council (Community Services manager, rural NSW).

> Financial assistance to Multicultural Pre-Harvest Festival. Awareness campaigns of cultural differences with child care centres and child care services. Active liaison with Aboriginal community in development of new interpretative exhibition - particularly in the procuring of a canoe tree for relocation to the new display (Community Services manager, rural NSW).

These comprehensive and multi-faceted packages are best practice modes of community relations intervention. Urban Community Services departments were a little remiss in terms of indigenous cultural diversity. Exceptions included the following council which developed a comprehensive and nationally applauded community relations package:

> (1) The Community Relations Consultative Committee has been initiated to enhance community input and participation in identifying and addressing community relations issues.
> (2) The Global Arts Unit (GAL) centre will play a fundamental role in showcasing [local] cultural identity and cultural heritage through traditional and non-traditional mediums, including "virtual" sites, exhibitions and demonstrations that directly involve the community.
> (3) The potential establishment of a new position that will target the needs and issues of the NESB and migrant community (grant application) will be key to further addressing NESB issues and raising the community's awareness of the wealth of our cultural diversity.
> (4) [Our] national award for the Indigenous Accord process has recognised the importance and efforts our department has made over the past 4 years in the reconciliation process.
> (5) Council is assisting in the development and introduction of a Community Education Study Kit on Multiculturalism in the ... region which will function in a similar manner as the existing Indigenous Reconciliation Study Circles program (Community Services manager, metropolitan Queensland).

A handful of councils produced training kits for staff on cross-cultural awareness, dealing with prejudice and combating racism. Other innovative interventions included:

> Carnivale - very successful when held. Ethnic representation on Cultural Development Consultative Committee. We provide "Welcome Kits" to all new citizens at Citizenship Ceremonies. Council is represented on the Inner West Multi-Cultural Resource Centre and was involved in its establishment (Community Services manager, metropolitan NSW).

> Production of a video ... promoting cultural understanding - very successful.
> Sponsored a community video production promoting multiculturalism in [this LGA]. The video was shown to all delegates attending the Global Cultural Diversity Conference in 1995 (Community Services manager, metropolitan NSW).

Cultural Expression

Nearly a quarter of all Community Services departments reported that they provided support for local community arts projects. This represents 189 cases in Australia. A third of these councils targeted community arts funding towards "ethnic minority" groups (Table 5.6). Table 5.6 indicates the extent to which Community Services departments had supported local cultural maintenance and expression. Thirty per cent of councils provided some form of support to local ethnic social clubs. Almost half of all the heads of department reported that council facilities and premises were provided free or were subsidised for local ethnic or indigenous groups. Generally, urban councils were more likely to provide these forms of support to maintain local cultural differences and local diversity. Indeed half of all urban councils provided these forms of support, whereas only 17 per cent of non-metropolitan councils provided support for local ethnic social clubs (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6   Percentage of metropolitan and non-metropolitan councils which support cultural expression by local indigenous or minority ethnic groups

Programs	Councils that responded to the survey		
	Metropolitan councils	Non-Metropolitan councils	All councils
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Arts funding to minority ethnic groups			
Yes	50.0	27.2	35.6
No	50.0	72.8	64.4
Support for local ethnic social clubs			
Yes	52.3	17.0	29.6
No	47.7	83.0	70.4
Free or subsidised council premises to local ethnic or indigenous groups			
Yes	61.8	38.6	49.6
No	38.2	61.4	50.4

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism
Note: Response from Community Services departments

Heads of Town Planning departments were asked to outline whether they had developed policies to specifically protect the physical heritage of local indigenous people and other non-Anglo or non-Christian groups. Fifty-seven per cent of Town Planning heads reported that they had set in place policies or regulations to protect sites of significance to local indigenous people (Table 5.7). In the states of NSW, Queensland and South Australia there was a higher rate of such council protection, whereas in Tasmania, Victoria and especially Western Australia, there was a much lower rate (Table 5.7). This represents a quite significant state by state disparity. The protection of other non-Anglo cultural heritages by Town Planning regulations was less common than for indigenous physical culture (37 per cent). South Australian, Tasmanian and NSW Town Planning departments were more likely to have such policies than were those in the other states.

Table 5.7   **Percentage of councils by state which had Town Planning departmental policies to protect indigenous sites and non-Christian religious buildings**

State	Sites of significance to indigenous people	Significant non Anglo Celtic/ non Christian religious buildings
	Per cent Yes	Per cent Yes
New South Wales	64.9	40.6
Victoria	47.1	23.1
Queensland	64.3	23.5
South Australia	61.9	45.0
Western Australia	35.7	35.0
Tasmania	45.5	42.9
All Responses	57.3	36.9

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism
Note: (1) Response from Town Planning departments
(2) Percentage figures calculated on 'Yes' and 'No' responses only, 'not applicable' responses not counted as valid cases. 'Not applicable' was selected by 25 per cent of those who responded

Forty-two per cent of councils considered that their record of protecting sites of significance to indigenous people was good or better. Table 5.8 demonstrates an expected relation between local government success at protecting indigenous local heritage and the institution of policies which have that aim. Just over 90 per cent of those Town Planning departments who considered that their record at protecting such sites was excellent reported that they had developed initiatives to protect indigenous people's sites of significance. Conversely, almost three-quarters of those whose self-assessed record was very poor had not put in place regulations (Table 5.8). It should be noted that a quarter (24.9 per cent) of all respondents selected "not applicable" as their response to the question which asked whether they had developed initiatives to specifically protect sites of significance for indigenous people. In open responses to a related question some Town Planning heads stated that the protection of indigenous physical culture was "not really an issue here" (rural NSW). A third of respondents from the states of Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania were of the opinion that these issues were "not

applicable" to councils. Only 16 per cent of Town Planning departments heads in NSW considered the protection of physical indigenous culture to not be applicable, while the figures were higher in Queensland (24.3 per cent) and Western Australia (28.2 per cent).

Table 5.8   Council policy and percentage self rating of success at protecting sites of significance to indigenous people

	Councils record on protecting indigenous sacred sites			
	Excellent	Good	Poor	Very Poor
Policy to protect sites of significance to indigenous people				
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Yes	90.9	72.5	50.0	71.4
No	9.1	27.5	50.0	28.6

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism
Note: Response from Town Planning departments

Town Planning department heads were asked to detail the types of advice they used to identify indigenous sacred sites and buildings of significance to non-Anglo-Celtic and non-Christian communities. Fifty-six per cent of respondents indicated the forms of advice they take in these matters, constituting 144 cases. In general there was a preference for the advice of experts (56), of government agencies (36) and in-house studies and surveys (9+). Respondents mentioned the National Parks and Wildlife Services, state departments of Aboriginal Affairs, Heritage agencies, and university or consultant surveys.

> We rely on state government indigenous agencies to let us know the location and significance of these sites (Town Planner, metropolitan Victoria).

> Local indigenous people will make Council aware of any significant sacred sites (Town Planner, rural West Australia).

These responses require local community groups to approach councils in order that physical cultural heritage is protected. However, fifty councils said that they sought community views and knowledge's, through bodies such as: local community groups, cultural associations, Aboriginal Liaison Committees and Land Councils.

> Refer development applications to Aboriginal groups - particularly subdivisions, quarries (Town planner, rural NSW).

> Advice from local Aboriginal Council would be sought (Town Planner, rural NSW).

> Consultation with the indigenous peoples' representatives, for the community know the particular area (Town Planner, rural South Australia).

Innovative examples of advice gathering included ethnographic surveys, archival searches, oral history projects and cultural mapping.

> [Our] regional strategy recognises indigenous culture and heritage. Municipal Inventory lists culturally sensitive sites. Shire ... Town Planning Scheme recognises places of heritage value. Cultural mapping as promoted by the Department of Arts could prove to be useful tool to encourage culturally sensitive planning with comprehensive strategies to recognise cultural heritage (Town Planning manager, non-metropolitan West Australia).

Ninety of these councils, which provided details on the advice they seek, were from non-metropolitan areas, which constituted 52 per cent of all respondents from non-metropolitan areas, whereas 54 were urban councils, constituting 65 per cent of respondents. In other words, Town Planning heads from urban localities were more prepared to outline the types of advice they seek than were those from rural areas.

Culturally flexible approaches to assessing mixed development and land uses had been incorporated by only 16 per cent of councils. This was particularly the case with Town Planning departments in South Australia, Victoria, and to a lesser extent, NSW (Table 5.7).

Heads of Public Health departments were asked to indicate their sensitivity to the death and dying rituals of local indigenous and non-Christian communities. Only nine per cent (23 cases) of respondents replied that they had carried out consultations with non-Christian communities and only ten per cent (25 cases) had done so with indigenous communities (Table 5.9). Non-metropolitan councils appear to have been slightly more consultative with indigenous communities than were urban areas, which may in fact reflect the geographical distribution of Australia's indigenous people.

Table 5.9   **Percentage of metropolitan and non-metropolitan councils which consulted with communities on appropriate rituals regarding death and dying**

Consultations	Councils that responded to the survey		
	Metropolitan councils	Non-Metropolitan councils	All councils
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Indigenous communities			
Yes	6.3	10.9	9.7
No	93.7	89.1	90.3
non-Christian communities			
Yes	9.9	8.6	8.8
No	90.1	91.4	91.2

Source: 1996 Survey of Local Government and Multiculturalism
Note: Response from Health departments

Conclusion

Councils reported a very positive self assessment of the cultural flexibility and sensitivity of their service provision. Seventy-eight per cent of councils considered the cultural sensitivity of their service provision to be good or better. However, there was a system-wide lack of council officer understanding of community relations policies. Knowledge of federal programs such as the Community Relations Strategy (1991b) and the Community Relations Agenda (1994a) was limited to a third of the officers from Community Services departments of local government. Knowledge of these programs, and of the recently released anti-racism package (DIMA, 1998), is essential for officers, and particularly managers, within local government

In general, metropolitan councils had a better record of instituting community relations programs than did non-metropolitan councils. Programs to improve staff and community awareness of local cultural diversity were more frequent in urban areas, as were projects to support the maintenance and expressions of cultural difference.

Significant state disparities were observable in the commitment of local government to inter-communal relations. The states of NSW and South Australia were better at protecting the physical culture of non-Anglo-Celtic groups. Victorian and NSW local government were more involved in promoting local cultural diversity. And, in terms of anti-racism policy, it was the states of NSW, Victoria and Western Australia which were the most active. It is likely that this varying degrees of commitment by state is associated with differing state government policies, as well as with the disparate ethnic relations histories of each state.

There are a range of community relations type projects in which local government in Australia have been involved. These included: the provision of knowledge and information about "non-Anglo-Celtic" culture and about local cultural diversity; remedies to counteract inter-communal tensions, and; projects to assist with cultural maintenance and expression. Clearly, most council interventions into local community relations are information provision-type projects, such as festivals, fairs and media products. These are legitimate community relations interventions which can have significant long term benefits. But local government has not demonstrated a commitment to policies at the "sharper end" of community relations intervention. Indeed, over 90 per cent of those LGAs which had recently experienced serious incidents of inter-communal tension had no official council formulated response to that discord. Clearly, local government in Australia requires much more guidance regarding its roles and responsibilities for local inter-communal relations.

Chapter Six

CONSTRAINTS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

> [Multicultural policy is] only needed where problems exist. There should not be a need for policies that differentiate between races; everyone should be treated the same. If the Federal Government had proper policies and programs in place there would not be any multicultural problems for local government to worry about. (General Manager, rural South Australia)

> Regional areas... [generally] have a fairly low proportion of multicultural families. This situation may in fact make it more isolating for people from other cultures and I would certainly like to see regional Australia offer greater opportunities and real inclusion of all cultures through promotion, multilingual publications, pamphlets and posters and education in our community. (Town Planner, rural Western Australia)

Introduction

The degree of engagement of local government councils with the multicultural question is constrained by several factors, not the least of which — as illustrated by the above quotations from two respondents to our survey — is attitudinal. These factors may be classified as legislative, organisational, financial and political/ attitudinal. This chapter considers each of these factors, illustrated by selected statements made by respondents in our survey, but based primarily on the broader literature on this subject. Generic arguments for local government being involved in the provision of human services, and the need for culturally sensitive delivery of services of all types, are also briefly reviewed.

Legislative considerations

Local government is, of course, a creature of state legislation. It has no independent constitutional existence. As a result, state governments proscribe the roles of local councils and significantly influence their financial and institutional capacities. Historically, the expansion of local government services, beyond the traditional focus on town planning, physical infrastructure, waste disposal, and health and building inspection, was restricted by state legislation. But the situation is now much more flexible. In NSW, for example, the *Local Government Act* of 1993 gave councils sufficient autonomy to involve themselves in all manner of policy. Moreover, regarding multiculturalism, in NSW at least councils are now required by law to prepare annual statements as to how they are addressing cultural diversity. While these legal responsibilities are detailed in Chapter Two, key legislation and policy statements in NSW are briefly referred to here to provide an example of legislative context.

The NSW *Local Government Act* (1993), Section 8(1), requires councils to exercise their functions a manner that is consistent with and actively promotes the principles of cultural diversity. Under Section 428:2(j) they are required to provide, in their Annual Reports, details of programs undertaken during

that year to promote services and access to services for people with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Other relevant official or semi-official "external" policy frameworks that constrain local practice include the following:

- The NSW "Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society" (EAC NSW, 1993), incorporated into the *Local Government Act* (1993), imposes a general responsibility on local government to recognise cultural diversity and to ensure that its implications are fully reflected in policy and practices.

- The NSW EAC White Paper - *Building on our Cultural Diversity* (1996) - recognises local government "as a significant provider of community services" and that local government is responsible for many planning decisions impacting on cultural life.

- The NSW *Social Justice Directions Statement* commits NSW Government to ensure that: "there is fairness in the distribution of resources; rights are recognised and promoted; people have fair access to the economic resources and services essential to meet their basic needs and to improve the equality of their life; and people have better opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives."

- The *Ethnic Affairs Commission Amendment Act* (1996) requires councils to observe "principles of cultural diversity".

- NSW Human Rights legislation "forbids discrimination and requires organisations like councils to provide services and activities in an equitable and accessible manner".

- NSW Government made a commitment in 1995 to legislate for access and equity within local government, with the Minister setting up a Reform Taskforce with a sub-committee on Social Planning charged with developing legislative and resource material instructing all councils to carry out a detailed social plan integrating issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people, non-English speaking background (NESB) and disability. (*Local Government (General) Amendment (Community Social Plans) Regulation* 1998, Government Gazette 16 January 1998.

Organisational considerations

Whilst legislative power is the sine qua non for councils to effectively engage with multiculturalism, the organisation histories of councils may also be an influence. Key factors here are attitudes of council staff and financial resources available to local government (addressed below). Another consideration is the growth of human service provision in local government. Also important is demographic information about cultural diversity and the needs that might be inferred from such information. The final matter mentioned here concerns the internal organisation of councils.

It is often when the emergence of new roles for local government is contemplated, especially expanded involvement in social planning and in the provision of human services, that the imperatives of multiculturalism become more pressing. There are two broad arguments in support of local government

expanding its role in delivering human services. First, there is the notion that local government can act as a delivery mechanism for services funded by higher levels of government. This may be appropriate where services need to be delivered close to their beneficiaries across a wide geographical range and where "local knowledge" may assist in the more effective targeting and shaping of services. Here, local government essentially acts as an in situ delivery framework that obviates the need for state or federal agencies to create their own delivery systems. There may, in addition, be local political benefits accruing to councils willing to take on such roles. A second argument for local engagement in the delivery of human services is where local politicians perceive that there are areas of need not being met by state and federal agencies. The provision of meals-on-wheels, affordable child-care, inexpensive housing and the promotion of economic development are cases in point (Commonwealth Department of Local Government and Administrative Service, 1987). But this argument for an expanded role for councils in human services can be more contentious within local communities, as is implied in the following sections of this chapter. Also, local expansion into human services is likely to further confuse the question of where the different levels of government should be involved. This is already a problem area according to 74 per cent of the General Manager respondents in this survey, who indicated that the various responsibilities of the three spheres of government for dealing with ethnic diversity have not been clearly enough established.

Whatever the strengths of these arguments, the rise in human and community services provided by councils is evidence of higher community demands and expectations that have influenced councils throughout Australia over the past couple of decades. As an index of this Albin (1995, p.142) notes that "between 1980 and 1991 real per capita expenditure in community services increased from $14.90 to $25.39 in NSW." He puts this in context by pointing out that over the same period, real per capita expenditure on roads went from $157 to $169.

The question of gaining demographic information is, at one level, straightforward. The five-yearly census conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provides a wealth of information about the populations of local government areas (LGAs). The evolution of information technology and increased recognition of its utility now means that such data is widely available and regularly used. Social profiling has become something of a growth industry. The problem is that such data provides only limited information on needs for services and the manner in which services are delivered or used. More complete information requires special-purpose collections that usually require further funding.

The traditional internal organisation of departments within councils may inhibit the expansion of human services and the adoption of multicultural policies. The lack of a corporate attitude to governance may result in individual departments regarding themselves as having discrete areas of concern; that, for example, the consideration of "social factors" is the province of Community Services departments. It has been argued, for example, that this has worked against a broadened conception of the ways town planning could incorporate multiculturalism (for example, McGillivray and Watson 1995, Sandercock 1998). In addition, this internal organisation can lead to competition between

departments, so that the expansion of multicultural service provision may be inhibited when it is viewed as entailing a shift of resources away from "core" functions.

Financial considerations

Our survey responses indicated that the most commonly reported constraint on councils in incorporating multicultural policies is financial. The following responses illustrate the situation:

> Local government is continually being asked to address the broad issues of multicultural problems but it does not have the financial resources. (General Manager, rural South Australia)

> The cost should not be a burden on local government. It is a much wider issue and should be resourced by federal government. (General Manager, rural Western Australia)

> Local government has limited funds for interpreting services. Often there are people from many different language backgrounds. However, each represents a small number so it becomes a question of use of resources. (General Manager, rural NSW)

> We believe that councils do not receive enough funding to implement policies and programs within the community development arena. There are now a lot more expectations placed on local government but there is a huge discrepancy between these expectations and funding allocations which would ensure a more effective service delivery. (Community Services manager, rural Queensland)

> The department is as busy keeping up with a whole range of other state and federal government initiatives (quality, safety, environment, Equal Employment Opportunity, competitive tendering) it simply has zero resources to devote to yet another one. This is in the face of decreasing revenue in the form of grants. (Engineering, rural Queensland)

There are several considerations here. First, it is arguable that the implementation of culturally sensitive policy and programs need not entail great expense. It may amount only to costs of additional community consultation and some reorganisation of council resources, including more sharing of information across regions. For example, Bankstown (NSW) prepared a Multicultural Affairs Policy in 1996 which proposed an impressive swag of multicultural policies with the reasonably modest costing of $32,500 to set up and a further $23,500 annually (Bankstown City Council, 1996). If, however, accommodating cultural diversity is regarded as requiring the expansion of human services, then there may well be costs that councils would have difficulty meeting. To understand this issue requires an understanding of how councils are financed and the limits to their financial capacities. These matters are now briefly addressed.

The primary source of funds accruing to Australian councils is taxes on property (rates) (Parkin 1982). Councils also raise funds from the sale of services and obtain grant funds from state and local government. Potential income from property taxes reflects property values in LGAs. Generally established middle and upper income urban areas have a high capacity to pay. Precisely because they are established, a higher percentage of council incomes can be dedicated to improving the quality of services. In newer areas of cities, where populations are growing rapidly and are typically composed of people on average and lower incomes (due either to age or to occupation), the financial capacity of councils is strained. In less populated rural areas and small towns, with few exceptions, the financial capacity of councils is highly constrained. Yet it is in such areas such as the former that recent immigrants and, in the latter, Aboriginal people tend to cluster. Thus the incidence of the need for multiculturally sensitive policy and programs, and for new types of human services, is typically greatest in those areas where the capacity of local government to provide them is least. This imbalance is supposed to be corrected, at least partly, through the mechanisms by which funds are distributed by state and federal government to local councils.

Local government in Australia provides a wide range of urban infrastructure and services, including local roads and drainage systems, libraries and child care facilities. Compared with other countries however, notably the United States, local government's role is residual, accounting for only 14 per cent of national spending on infrastructure (Commonwealth Industry Commission, 1993, 12). Major urban infrastructure and public services are supplied by the states. This is important because it means that the size of local tax bases is a much less important determinant of service availability and quality than it is in some other parts of the world (Murphy and Watson, 1994). The financial capacity of local government has nevertheless been limited for several years with rate (property tax) increases - the main source of revenue - being capped below inflation by fiat from state governments. This was noted, for example, by a Community Services manager in metropolitan Victoria, who said that "[whilst there are] no political impediments [to greater government action] the major restricting factor is access to funding and council is severely constrained by the state-imposed rates freeze." Since immigrants favour some localities over others as places to live, any extra demand for services may, in this fiscal environment, create difficulties (Cutts 1992).

The federal government contributes directly to local government to varying degrees across the Australian states under the *Commonwealth Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act* 1995 and its predecessors. In 1995-96, A$1,160 million were distributed under this arrangement, although proportional to national gross domestic product this amount has been declining since the early 1980s (NSW Local Government Grants Commission, 1995). Funds are distributed through state governments to councils according to formulae devised by state Local Government Grants Commissions. Formulae include weighting for NESB populations. It is recognised that immigrants do make an impact on local government services but it is considered to be very small relative to overall budgets. Demands include the provision of multi-lingual information, ethnic affairs officers (partly funded by councils), specialised librarians and community workers. But on the whole "ethno-specific" services — and

multicultural sensitising of mainstream services - constitute only a small proportion of council budgets even in areas of high immigrant numbers.

Problems in financing service provision relate much more to the low socioeconomic status of populations in some LGAs rather to the particular requirements of immigrants who may live there. Financial Assistance Grants as a proportion of local government revenue range from less than 3 per cent to over 20 per cent among, for example, Sydney's councils. It is notable, however, that high proportions are found in councils with substantial immigrant populations, such as Marrickville, Fairfield and Canterbury. These also happen to be areas of lower than average socioeconomic status and so are financially constrained. This is particularly so in Fairfield which is a fast growing outer suburban area. Not only is the capacity of the population to pay for services relatively low, the demand for services is growing rapidly. The situation is mirrored in parts of other Australian cities and in rural towns. Not only do immigrants in some localities create a substantial part of the demand for locally supplied infrastructure, they also suffer from inadequacies in supply.

Thus to properly discharge their responsibilities, councils, especially those with large NESB and/or ATSI populations, require greater financial resources although they have only a limited capacity to generate them.

Another important issue concerns the size of councils and whether they are large enough to finance a wider range of services and to deliver service more efficiently. Some councils have banded together to improve their service provision to NESB people, as one respondent explained:

> [Our council area] is too small to fund LGA-only ethnic services. However, we are participating in sub-regional and area needs assessment and service development which make more effective use of public resources. Submission for a Migrant Resource Centre for [the adjoining council area is] currently pending. (Community Services manager, metropolitan NSW)

Arguments for amalgamation of councils rest partly on this question of efficient service delivery. In this regard it is interesting to note that a number of Victorian councils, in their responses to the survey, made positive comments about the amalgamations that have taken place in that state. Examples include:

> Council amalgamation has allowed council to develop a strategic plan for the consolidated shire. This has provided the opportunity to develop greater understanding between Aboriginal communities and the roles and responsibilities of council, particularly in relation to new development areas of cultural significance. (Town Planner, rural Victoria)

> Amalgamation has speeded up the review and update of all planning schemes to the betterment of the community. More consultation is being required by government and is being carried out. (Town Planner, rural Victoria)

Amalgamations provide opportunity for a higher level of service in these areas consistent across a larger region. Scarce resources will mean that Council must be more efficient in targeting users and ensuring maximum participation. (Health manager, rural Victoria)

Political considerations

It is obvious that local political support is a critical factor influencing the degree to which councils implement effective multicultural policies. Survey responses from General Managers (173 responses) showed that many thought that multicultural policy was unnecessary (57 responses) or a low priority (40 responses) - usually because of low numbers of NESB or ATSI people. However examination of General Manager's qualitative comments indicated a wide spectrum of political opinion:

Any problems should be based on assimilating multicultural [people] into the community rather than maintaining groups as separate identities (General Manager, rural Western Australia)

We treat all people as one community. (General Manager, rural Queensland)

There is a lack of broad based awareness both within Council and in the wider community of pertinent multicultural issues. (General Manager, metropolitan NSW)

We have seen the effectiveness of [our multicultural] program even after a year, as local government is the closest government to the people. (General Manager, metropolitan Western Australia)

Multiculturalism is a critical factor in the continuing education of the Australian community to celebrate our diversity. (General Manager, rural Queensland)

The argument that local services should be delivered in a culturally sensitive manner seems unproblematic and might reasonably be regarded as merely an aspect of local government doing a good job. Yet, the commitment to multiculturalism that underpins such an argument is clearly not universally accepted in the political climate of the late 1990s. Debate also turns on the degree to which the need for cultural sensitivity is regarded as being central or marginal to effective policy-making and service delivery. With respect to the conventional activities of most councils the matter may be reasonably characterised as being of variable importance but often at the margin of policy considerations. A counter view to this sanguine position is that, due to long standing neglect of such matters as well as inappropriate past practices, there is a lot of catching up to do.

Three factors influence the political climate in councils. First, and most obviously, there is the level of apparent need. Demographic profiles crudely index this. As was noted above, however, knowledge of such facts does not translate directly into assessments of social needs and there are often financial costs

involved in getting better information. Second, there is the degree of involvement of people from NESB and ATSI backgrounds in local politics. This has obvious implications for perceptions of need and for the building of political support for multicultural policy and programmes. Third, there is the attitude of councillors to the expansion of human services as a whole.

In the latter case, a strong commitment to council involvement in the provision of human services may signify attitudes amongst councillors that are conducive to councils responding adequately to multicultural sensitivities. Two factors may inhibit the willingness of elected representatives to expand human services at the local level. First, there is the perception that rate incomes should be spent on "mainstream" taxpayers rather than being diverted to cross subsidising the less affluent parts of local populations. This attitude underpins the traditional local government emphasis on providing services to property rather than to people as such. A second consideration is the view that state and federal governments should deliver human services and that local government should not be forced into doing the "hard yakka" of others. Often underpinning such positions is a politically conservative attitude to "welfare" provision and perhaps also to the recognition of cultural diversity.

Conclusion

These constraints on local government making a stronger commitment to multiculturalism in several cases entail clear actions. First, political attitudes antithetical to human services provision and to multiculturalism will act as a major constraint. Education programs, for example in cross cultural awareness, need to be continued and targeted at councils who are slow to respond. Secondly, in regard to organisational cultures it may be hoped that a more corporate attitude to governance, entailing the breaking down of barriers between traditional departments of councils will facilitate more effective multicultural policy. Thirdly, there still seems to be a question as to the basis on which disability weightings - used to distribute federal government funds to local government - is calculated. Perhaps there is a need for cross-national research on this topic. This could be extended to an assessment of claims made by state governments to the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Fourthly, comments from amalgamated councils in Victoria are of interest since they suggest that a greater scale of operation is facilitating the delivery of multicultural programs. Of course amalgamation is not required to achieve such efficiencies, and the survey indicated many commendable examples of councils informally pooling resources in this area.

Perhaps the main constraint to be emphasised is the unenviable financial situation in which so many councils described themselves, caught between the rock of increasing expectations and the hard place of diminishing resources. Respondents to our survey stated again and again that more effective incorporation of multicultural policies and programs in local government required the financial and political backing of both state and federal governments:

> State and federal government do not acknowledge seriously the role of local government (lack of resources, poor funding, poor communication and consultation). (Town Planner, metropolitan South Australia)

Got no money to spend! Thank Jeff, and the culture of local government and the lean and mean economic rationalist climate we live in. (Health, metropolitan Victoria)

There is a need for [multicultural policies]. There is also a need for money and resources to enable this implementation in local government. Whilst such initiatives are admirable, unless they prioritised and resourced appropriately they are a waste of time and taxpayers money. (Engineer, rural Queensland)

Increase in responsibilities transferred from other levels of government combined with budgeting constrictions/ no increase in resources means [it is] difficult for local government to be "culturally sensitive"... Programs become mainstream population oriented as resources are stretched to the limit. (Health, rural South Australia)

Lack of State and Federal support... has made it extremely difficult to put into place initiatives under the Council's cultural policy working plan. (Community Services, metropolitan Queensland)

Local Government is rarely consulted but is often required to implement without adequate briefing or resourcing... The process of diverse legislation makes it extremely difficult to co-ordinate the development of policies. Often federal policies are in conflict with state initiatives. (Town Planner, metropolitan South Australia)

Chapter Seven

REPRESENTATIONS OF LOCAL CITIZENSHIP

In 1994, the South Australian Local Government Association produced a report with the remarkable title, "Local Councils Belong to Aboriginal People Too". It is revealing that it was so recently considered appropriate to assert that indigenous people are citizens in local governance. This is an understanding which should have been incorporated three decades ago if not before, when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people were acknowledged as Australian citizens in the referendum of 1967. The existence of a report with such a title suggests that understandings of citizenship have been subject to wide interpretation and various practices of inclusion and exclusion. Australian local government is still struggling with the reconceptualisation of its constituency from being "a monocultural community" to a "multicultural community" (Rentschler 1997, 130). The result is that diverse social groups that exhibit cultural difference risk being effectively excluded from the benefits and responsibilities of full citizenship at the local level.

The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines the word "citizen" to have several meanings which include: "1. member, native or naturalised, of a state or nation (as distinguished from *alien*); 2. a person owing allegiance to a government and entitled to its protection; 3. an inhabitant of a city or town, especially one entitled to its privileges and franchise." It also defines "citizenship" as "the status of a citizen, with its rights and duties". These definitions share a concern firstly with differentiating between citizens and non-citizens and secondly with an exchange of rights and obligations between citizens and their government. While nations traditionally exercise a legal understanding of "citizen" as someone either born or naturalised there, the notion of citizenship explored here is somewhat broader, "a civil attribute obtainable by residence in a particular place, and bearing with it substantive rights and obligations specific to that place" (Scott, 1998, 797). This chapter advocates an understanding of citizenship which aspires to social justice and is more inclusive than the legal understanding. It suggests that all people who use a local government area (LGA) should be understood and addressed as citizens in a local council's purview of responsibilities

This chapter examines representations of citizenship in local government in Australia specifically in relation to ATSI people and people of non-English speaking background (NESB). The focus is on textual analysis of statements from local councils, drawn firstly from the responses to our questionnaire on multiculturalism and secondly from council publications which often accompanied the responses (such as social plans and annual reports). These include conscious policy statements, off-the-cuff and sometimes admittedly personal answers to the questionnaire, and even the use of imagery in council publications. These statements are used to trace the variety of ways in which contemporary local government in Australia represents its constituency, and as an indication of how it understands its citizenry.

Few of the council plans and statements use the word "citizen". Rather, understandings of citizenship are inferred from the ways they represent certain social groups and the community as a whole. The statements are discussed under three categories of analysis: "Us versus them"; "Acknowledging diversity"; "Addressing diversity". Such statements are not always truthful characterisations of what really takes place in every LGA, because as one respondent noted: "It takes a short time to write a policy and an eternity to change organisational cultures" (Community Services manager, metropolitan NSW). However, it is understood here that a progressive and inclusive statement by a council can in itself help shift organisational cultures, at least by acting as a resource for client activists. As well as criticising the ways some councils represent their constituency, this chapter offers examples of "best practice" representations derived from our survey, which demonstrate a local politics of inclusive citizenship and social justice.

Us versus them

From the huge array of responses to the questionnaire, several could be seen to use a language of "us" versus "them". This language suggests an understanding of "them", as being outside the imagined community (Anderson, 1983), as creating special difficulties and/or enjoying special benefits. Most of the obvious comments of this type referred to Aboriginal people. In one example, a respondent stated:

> We see no disadvantage in being a member of a multicultural minority group. They are particularly well provided with funding and services by State and Commonwealth departments, so well in fact that it is causing dissatisfaction in the working community. (General Manager, rural Western Australia)

Here the "we" of the council officers merges with the "we" of the apparently homogeneous, majority "working community" in resentment of the supposed advantages enjoyed by the "they" of the apparently non-working, multicultural, minority group. The comment contests the citizenship of this group by questioning the rights and obligations they exchange with government - both the contributions they make and the benefits they receive. Another example of the us/them dichotomy positioned the council officers as more well meaning but also self serving and condescending:

> The Aboriginal population (second highest in NSW) and their behavioural problems have created a negative image for [the city]. Council is endeavouring to promote the cultural heritage of the Aboriginal people as an "attraction", and by doing so raise the self esteem of the Aboriginal people and provide them with more meaningful lives. (General Manager, rural NSW)

In both cases the language implies the civic exclusion of certain people. "They" are not present as councillors nor employees nor are they considered to be residents worthy of being consulted by council. "They" are constructed as different and problematic in themselves, as outside of the normal local democratic processes. In this second quote, Aboriginal lifestyles are presented as not "meaningful". An assimilationist version of citizenship presumes ATSI people may be acceptable when local government integrates them economically and culturally into the "mainstream" community.

Other respondents in the survey used telling phrases to describe Aboriginal people such as "local tribe members" (Town Planners in rural NSW and Queensland) and "fringe dwellers" (General Manager, rural Western Australia) which also suggest an understanding of them as alternative to "us", "normal" citizens.

In our survey, there were more subtle statements which effectively denied citizenship, such as comments which pointed to native title claims as "creating conflict" (General Manager rural South Australia) or "greatly hindering development" (Town Planner, rural Queensland). Rather than seeing a native title claim as a valid legal action by certain citizens properly exercising their common law rights, these comments imply that such claims are disruptive and obstructive of "normal" economic activity. And so they might well be, insofar as "normal" economic development traditionally encouraged by local government has tended to exclude Aboriginal people and others whose cultural pursuits are outside the "mainstream". However, if ATSI people are understood to be citizens equally alongside everyone else, their preferred modes of economic and environmental activity would be respected and represented in local governance, rather than assumed to be some kind of nuisance.

The consequences of an "us versus them" mentality became apparent in the notorious *Toomelah Report* by the Human Rights Commission of Australia (HRCA) in 1988. The Report found that the "Toomelah community of five hundred Aboriginal people endures appalling living conditions which amount to a denial to them of the most basic rights taken for granted by most other groups in society, and by other Australian communities of similar size." Whilst acknowledging that both federal and state governments are also at fault, the report was highly critical of the local council. It concluded that:

> Moree Plains Shire Council, whilst levying rates on the residents as if supplying them with services supplied to other ratepayers, has denied to Toomelah residents the services supplied to other ratepayers and residents of the Shire. Moreover, the failure of the Shire council to accept responsibility for Toomelah has resulted in Commonwealth and state funding for local government services being denied to the people of Toomelah, although received by the Shire Council for them and on the basis that they are residents of the Shire. (HRCA, 1988, 61)

However, our recent interview with the General Manager of the Moree Plains Shire Council suggested that the Council had been making better efforts to include the local Aboriginal community in its citizenry (although developments in the Toomelah situation were not discussed). The General Manager detailed council initiatives which included: establishment of an Aboriginal Consultative Committee; a mentoring scheme to encourage local Aboriginal people to run for Council; sponsoring ATSI exhibitions and encouraging Aboriginal participation in cultural events; improved ATSI library collection including genealogical resources; organisation of a seminar on Land Rights legislation to dispel prejudice and misinformation; supporting an Aboriginal football competition; backing a proposal to establish an Aboriginal Cultural Centre, and; providing mediation over "Boobera Lagoon", a popular water skiing site also recently recognised as one of the most significant sacred sites in eastern Australia.

An outstanding contrast to earlier derogatory ways of representing Aboriginal people in local government is apparent in a series of reports commissioned in the mid 1990s by the District Council of Ceduna in South Australia. Remotely located as the last stop before the Nullarbor Plain, Ceduna had a small stable population of 4,000 including a high proportion of indigenous people, 16 per cent in the LGA and 25 per cent if including outlying regions. Ceduna also had an estimated rate of 400,000 tourists passing through annually. Motivated to improve Ceduna's economic prospects by developing its tourism capacity in collaboration with the local Aboriginal communities, the Ceduna local government decided that it needed to address its "current situation of social conflict" by seriously entering into "the reconciliation process" with its local indigenous people. Admitting a past "reputation of being one of the most racist towns in Australia" (it was one of the few electoral districts in Australia to return a "no" vote in the 1967 referendum), Ceduna set out to reconfigure itself as an "exemplary multicultural community". It was the Ceduna District Council which at this time coined the title phrase as its vision, "Councils belong to Aboriginal People too" (Nicholas Clark and Associates, c.1994, 1-7).

An inclusive use of language was apparent throughout the Ceduna reports, which were developed with substantial community involvement including indigenous people:

> The Council and the organisations of the Aboriginal communities in Ceduna have begun to work together on processes of reconciliation... to work on issues of common interest and concern. This is being done by promoting wider recognition of the disadvantages of indigenous peoples and its causes, establishing mutual recognition of and agreement on the need for change, for cooperative problem solving, and facilitating the development and implementation of shared plans for change, particularly by promoting indigenous employment opportunities. (Nicholas Clark and Associates, c.1994, 3).

Rather than privilege the perspective of any one social group, it was stated that "There are vastly different social values about people and place among the... main communities of Ceduna. Each community has quite different perceptions of Ceduna as a place, and in many cases little knowledge of the perceptions of the other communities" (Nicholas Clark and Associates, c.1994, 2). This is an important acknowledgment because lack of awareness of divergent perspectives and disparate knowledges always underpins problematic community relations. The high indigenous unemployment rate was not posited as an "Aboriginal problem", but explained as a result of "Cultural perceptions in the non indigenous community... [playing] an important role in the reduced availability of employment opportunities for Aboriginals" (Nicholas Clark and Associates, 1996, 6). Interestingly, Council had responded to the issue of Aboriginal residents receiving frequent visits by family and friends, notorious for causing conflict in Anglo-Celtic dominated neighbourhoods, with the policy that: "Council has accepted its responsibility to assist with accommodating itinerant Aboriginals who visit Ceduna from nearby Aboriginal settlements". This included commissioning a consultancy to address the issues, setting up a Council committee with a majority of Aboriginal members to carry out recommendations,

and considering means of funding "culturally appropriate accommodation for these visitors" (Nicholas Clark and Associates, c.1994, 9). Such policy approaches suggest an inclusive recognition of Aboriginal citizens as one of "us".

Acknowledging diversity

The need for multicultural policies seems obvious in metropolitan areas where the proportion of NESB people is very high by any standard (see Chapter Three). By contrast, many rural respondents to the survey pointed out that the post World War II expansion and broadening of migration had barely touched them, and therefore they had no need for such policies. As one respondent pointed out with a certain irony,

> We are a small, highly dispersed rural community with few, if any, people displaying *or prepared to display* any cultural diversity. (Community Services manager, rural Tasmania; our emphasis)

However, rural areas do typically have a local population of indigenous Australians who have often been ignored in local governance based on an assumed monocultural community. Moreover between these apparent poles of great diversity and little diversity is a large proportion of "grey" LGAs in Australia which have some component of NESB people and ATSI people (Table 1.1). Many of these councils are unclear about the significance of their diversity or how they could address it within strict financial constraints. As one respondent pointed out,

> There are challenges for LGAs who have a lower than average percentage of population spread over a large number of ethnic groups... Research... publications and models are based on a large percentage of [NESB] population. These models are unable to be utilised here. (Community Services manager, regional centre, NSW)

The temptation for these administrations is to down-play levels of ethnic and cultural diversity, as in this statement:

> This local government area has three main groups, Australian, Italian (17%) and Aboriginal (2%), then little or no other ethnic groups. (Town Planner, rural NSW)

The implication would seem to be that three communities sharing the same place does not constitute enough diversity to concern anyone, and the respondent above indeed reported that their department offered no multicultural support services. An overview of qualitative responses from the survey provides evidence of ways in which local cultural diversity is underplayed or not acknowledged. Such lack of acknowledgment is a foundation for ignoring "small" or "hidden" groups.

Refusal to acknowledge diversity can be seen in statements such as "We do not consider that there is such a thing as unequal access" (Engineer, rural Western Australia). Even in the most homogenous LGA, there is diversity in terms of age, gender, sexuality, health, capability, education, literacy and wealth. Australian government policy at all three levels caters to this diversity by offering "unequal access": for example, literate and healthy people have access to libraries and sporting facilities; school-

aged children are provided with and obliged to attend full-time education; elderly, sick and unemployed people are entitled to welfare payments. Those who argued that "Everyone should be treated the same" (General Manager, rural South Australia) were inevitably accepting the traditional differences within Australian society but reticent to acknowledge newly emerging differences which require flexible service delivery if everyone is indeed to have access.

Another way of resisting an acknowledgment of diversity was to assert that multicultural initiatives had been rescinded due to a lack of demand:

> Multicultural Day 1995 was cancelled due to lack of interest. Not proceeded with in 1996. (General Manager, rural Western Australia)

> Meals on wheels attempted to introduce "ethnic" meals but it was not well received by existing clients. (Community Services manager, metropolitan NSW)

However, a lack of interest in "Multicultural Day" may be indicative of a failure to consult and involve the appropriate people in the planning process, rather than a sign that local diversity was considered not worth celebrating. As one respondent noted, "Carnivale - very successful when held Ethnic representation on Cultural Development Consultative Committee." (Community Services manager, metropolitan NSW). The observation about ethnic meals on wheels not satisfying "existing clients" surely *emphasises* the need to diversify the service, precisely because it demonstrates that elderly people do tend to have definite, traditional ideas about their diet. This incident begs the question of how many potential "ethnic" clients do not utilise the service because the food is considered unpalatable, and are thereby disadvantaged when the tastes of "existing clients" are assumed to be more compelling.

Probably the most obvious emerging form of diversity in Australia today is proficiency in English, an increasingly important skill in our post-industrial, bureaucratised society. To fail to offer translation and interpretation services to someone who cannot speak English can effectively deny them use of services and facilities, one of their rights of citizenship. Yet our survey indicated that 45-63 per cent of departments within local government across Australia *never* used interpreting or translation services while 86-95 per cent "rarely or never" used them. These percentages are probably an overestimation of use. Our respondents constituted just under half of Australian local governments, but very likely the half which was more interested in and proud of their multicultural policies; certainly they were the half representing most of the more ethnically diverse LGAs. Nonetheless, more than fifty per cent of Australian LGAs have between three and nine percent of their population born in a NES country. (Table 1.1). The low usage levels of interpretation services across Australia suggests that councils with low proportions of NESB people do not feel compelled to acknowledge or address the NESB populations they do have.

The survey respondents offered several comments which showed how apparent demands for such services are often not acknowledged:

> No translation services have been required but when so it is usually done by a friend of [the] applicant. (Town Planner, regional centre NSW)

> ...irrelevant for this Council. We have no ethnic community and a very small ethnic community. (General Manager, rural NSW)

> Non English speaking groups... are rarely known to settle in regional/ rural areas in any numbers. Where they have, they have quickly assimilated and learnt English. Aboriginal people all speak, write and understand English. (Community Services manager, rural NSW)

Translation services are not required except when they are; NESB people do not settle in rural areas except when they do; there is no ethnic community and some ethnic community. In each case, council's intervention was not required, because applicants get their own friends to help, or because migrants assimilate and learn English "quickly", apparently before any requirements for local government services arise. The second statement ignores social research which shows: that migrant families tend to "assimilate" differently, that children learn English rapidly, fathers with varying ease and mothers often not at all; and that Aboriginal people's access to education is often patchy with the result that written competence in English varies greatly. The council officers' statements contradict themselves and confound the established research by attempting to construct a familiar sense of "sameness" in their constituencies, and thus in their own duties.

Local government annual reports provide useful indications of the extent to which a council is acknowledging cultural diversity, in terms of: their vision and mission/role statements; their imagery; and their descriptions of their demographic profile. These may be no real indication of the extent to which councils have actually incorporated multicultural policies in their everyday practices, however, they may be seen as a first important step in making broad acknowledgments of inclusive citizenship. Perhaps predicably, the two of the most multicultural LGAs in Australia have "vision" statements which emphasise their diversity. Fairfield's (NSW) vision is "Celebrating diversity", while Canterbury's (NSW) is "City of cultural diversity". However, while Fairfield's mission was: "A City of many cultures working together with understanding and tolerance to create opportunities and a rich quality of life in one cosmopolitan community"(Fairfield *Annual Report 1996*), Canterbury's mission makes little gesture towards multiculturalism in stating: "To enhance our community's lifestyle by the provision of works and services that are efficient, cost effective and accessible" (Canterbury *Annual Report 1996*). Even council areas with relatively low numbers of NESB have adopted pro-diversity visions, such as Bombala's (NSW) "retaining visual beauty whilst embracing a quiet relaxed lifestyle and a progressive diversified community" (*Annual Report 1996*) and Northern Midlands' (TAS) aim "to encourage vibrant local communities of distinct characters and foster a sense of pride in the

Northern Midlands area" (*Annual Report 1995*). Such inclusive definitional statements are important symbolic gestures which cost nothing in dollars and cents.

Most council's annual reports are illustrated with images of "people and places" from the LGA. Many annual reports make no visual reference to ethnic diversity in the local population, sometimes depicting only councillors and officers who are entirely Anglo-Celtic in appearance, for example Northern Midlands Council's *Annual Report 1995*, (which makes an odd contrast with its mission statement, mentioned above). By contrast, Fairfield's *Annual Report 1996* was richly illustrated with colour images of people from a broad array of backgrounds participating both in the everyday life of the city (visiting the council offices, working in construction, school children at the library) and in culturally specific festivals. Wollongong and Shellharbour are adjacent LGAs with similar demographic profiles; however whereas Shellharbour's *Summary Annual Report* of 1995 depicted only Anglo-Celtic looking workers, residents and tourists, Wollongong's *Annual Report 1996* featured a cover photo of an Asian-Australian child helping plant trees, while within the report there were several more images of NESB people engaged in everyday activities, as well as a noticeable emphasis on the recent opening of "the Nan Tien Temple, the largest Buddhist temple in the southern hemisphere". Interestingly however, it was Shellharbour which by that time had better institutionalised multicultural policies including: accrediting bilingual staff as translators, installation of three-way phones in each department for telephone interpreting services, completion of a comprehensive ethnic communities profile, a substantial increase in allocation of funding to the libraries' language other than English (LOTE) collection, and plans to establish a multicultural community centre. By contrast, Wollongong had established two liaison committees but its stated involvement in multiculturalism was otherwise limited to participating in festivals and translating its library policy guidelines into community languages.

Some annual reports stressed cultural diversity as a cultural and economic advantage, as in Brisbane's City Council's (QLD) stress on Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) as ensuring "a strong, diverse workforce with a direct understanding of the needs and aspirations of the entire range of our customers" *Annual Report 1996*. Others obscured the extent of diversity, such as Boroondara's (VIC) description of its "Demographics" as "150,000 people, 62,500 dwellings, 48,000 trees". However Boroondara also outlined "Cultural Mix" as: 1.4 per cent born in Malaysia, 1.8 per cent born in Italy, 1.9 per cent born in Greece, 5 per cent born in U.K, 73.4 per cent born in Australia", a description which however meant 16.5 per cent of the population was unaccounted for (*Annual Report 1995*). Most annual reports did not mention or measure their diversity at all, leaving articulation of their demographic profiles to more specific reports such as community and social plans or access and equity policies.

The recent statutory requirement that all NSW councils outline programs they have instituted that year "to exercise its functions in a manner that is consistent with and actively promotes the principles of cultural diversity" (*Local Government Act* 1993) may be forcing councils in NSW to better acknowledge their diverse constituencies as well as encouraging them to action. Murray Shire Council

in rural NSW responded to this requirement by explaining that while census figures suggested there were only 6 people in the LGA who could not speak English well, 3.0 per cent were ATSI and the annual report went on to detail several initiatives oriented towards this part of their citizenry (Murray *Annual Report* 1996, 21). This legislation could act as a model for other states interested in improving their local government's implementation of multiculturalism.

Addressing diversity

Even amongst councils which recognised ethnic diversity as being an issue in local governance, the survey responses indicate that a broad array of strategies have been used to address that diversity. These strategies stretch from denial of responsibility or partial acceptance, through to serious incorporation of multicultural policies.

The most noticeable strategy of denial was for respondents to posit multicultural policies as peripheral to council's "core" functions - which presumably are focused on "very much a roads, rates and rubbish mentality" (General Manager, metropolitan Queensland). Thus one respondent wrote,

> [Multiculturalism] is not seen as core business. Funding levels do not permit expansion/ movement into this area. (General Manager, rural NSW)

Numerous such comments asserted the need to prioritise "more fundamental issues", "basic planning issues", "service delivery", to be "mainstream population oriented". Alternatively, multicultural policies as "a luxury", "a fringe policy", "unusual" or "low priority". In pointing to the repeated use of this core/ periphery dichotomy, we do not wish to underestimate the pressures felt by local government as it faces increasing obligations with reducing resources (see Chapter Six). However, we do contest the assumption that multiculturalism is not central to the "core business" of "service delivery". There is a multitude of ways in which local government in Australia has failed to address the diversity of its citizenry within its "core functions"; perhaps the most widely commented example is refusing development applications for mosques for fear of disrupting neighbourhoods which usually have already well established Christian churches (Watson and McGillivray, 1994; Sandercock and Kliger, 1997). A preferable approach, which does not oppose the importance of multiculturalism to core service delivery, was expressed by one respondent who wrote,

> It will take time (and resources) for multicultural policies to be adopted as intrinsic elements of "good customer service" (Community Services manager, rural South Australia)

This comment is an acknowledgment that councils have a responsibility to service *all* their citizens, that multiculturalism can and should be incorporated into "core" functions, although such changes to local government structure require more backing from other levels of government. This comment takes for granted that strategies for addressing local ethnic diversity are also about making customer service systems more responsive and efficient.

The most common strategy of partial acceptance of multicultural policies is apparent in councils where, as one respondent complained,

> it is seen as a Community Services, rather than a corporate issue. It is critical for the organisation to take responsibility and not take the view that it is just one section of the organisation that is responsible. (Community Services manager, metropolitan NSW)

Some councils seem to have restricted their incorporation of multicultural policies to community service functions such as organising or supporting multicultural festivals and community arts exhibitions, and making community facilities available to ethnic groups. One council admitted that "Use of cultural and arts workers to create awareness [is] sometimes easier than directly addressing harassment and discrimination". While such measures are desirable, they fall short of more comprehensive initiatives incorporated by other councils.

The "best practice" local governments, as viewed by our survey of questionnaire responses and policy documents, attempted to incorporate multicultural policies at all levels including: encouraging ethnic and indigenous community representatives' involvement in all democratic processes, from standing as councillors, attending council meetings, sitting on council committees, participating in council consultations and attending ceremonies such as Australia Day celebrations; encouraging ethnic and indigenous community representatives to apply for employment within council under EEO guidelines, with the often added advantage that as bilingual workers they could be accredited as language aides; changing policies of service provision to accommodate clients with English language difficulties by organising interpretation and telephone translation services at all public counters, translating key council publications (such as annual reports, health notices and ethnic access policies) into major community languages, incorporating international symbols into local signs, maintaining LOTE collections in libraries, collecting data on the types of clients using specific services, as well as advertising these services in community languages on council letterhead; expanding community service provision by making existing services more ethno-sensitive and providing new ethno-specific services; changing planning regulations to be more flexible towards diverse housing, commercial and community requirements including mixed land-use zoning; and acknowledging a complexity of community histories in heritage initiatives which featured indigenous prior occupation of the land and recent immigrant contributions together with more traditional Anglo-Celtic monuments. These policy initiatives are evidence of admirable but necessary efforts to incorporate diverse cultural groups within all the rights and obligations of citizenship.

This chapter argues that some councils could be more inclusive of ATSI and NESB people as citizens in local governance. It highlights problematic representations and practices in comments from the questionnaire responses and council reports and policies, and offers alternative examples of "best practice" from other councils.

Chapter Eight
CONCLUSION

This monograph presents findings of the first comprehensive national survey of local government and multicultural policy. We set out to examine the following issues:

- the extent of cultural diversity across Australia

- the ways in which councils are providing accessible and equitable services for all members of their communities

- the mechanisms used to enhance community relations such as celebrating cultural diversity and dealing with attitudinal racism and outbreaks of intolerance

- the limitations facing local councils which make it difficult for them to formulate and implement multicultural policy

- the definition of citizenship in a multicultural society.

Our study provides an overview of the development of the institutionalisation of multicultural policy in local government, focusing on the issues of symbolic representation, access to services, inter-communal relations and cultural expression. This review uncovered a complex web of national, state and local responses to Australia's growing cultural diversity. It showed how Australia has made significant advances in a short period. At the same time, some aspects of service provision and protection from discrimination warrant further attention. This history also revealed changing political positions as different governments put their stamp on the "Multicultural Project". There have been periods of vigorous national debate about the social, economic and political changes associated with an increasingly multicultural population. These discussions gave rise to some of the landmark statements on multiculturalism (see Chapter Two) and have furthered the understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity. The most recent debate is still being played out with the One Nation Party opposing multiculturalism and advocating a return to policies of assimilation. However, the history of multiculturalism suggests that the "Multicultural Project" will emerge stronger and more entrenched than ever. The acceptance of a shift in national identity and the fact of multicultural composition suggests that a most important change has been made and that there is no turning back. The criticisms, or "backwashes and eddies" (Morrissey and Mitchell, 1993, 22-5), provide a platform for researchers and policy makers, community members and citizens to develop and reaffirm the principles and practices of multiculturalism.

Our research has found that demographic diversity is widespread. There are few regions in Australia which have insignificant representations of migrant or indigenous communities. The major urban areas have the largest NESB immigrant populations in both a proportional and absolute sense, with *every* local government area in metropolitan Sydney and Melbourne having a significant level of cultural diversity. Rural areas do have lower levels of cultural diversity. However, in all but a few extremely remote and small LGAs, persons of a NESB are present, while ATSI people almost invariably form a

significant constituency there. Given such profound and widespread levels of cultural diversity, local government must institute a systematic response to the needs of different groups. Not only should councils develop an awareness of the nature of their local diversity, they have to identify and abandon discriminatory and iniquitous practices in the provision of services and facilities. An ad-hoc approach is no longer sustainable nor can it be justified.

The research revealed a wealth of innovative policy and practice across the different councils which responded. In the provision of accessible and equitable services and facilities, local government is using a variety of different approaches to reach NESB and indigenous groups. These extend from training staff, to employing specialist officers, and implementing creative practices to expand the usage of council services. Surprisingly, interpreting and translation services, now widely available, are not used as much as one might expect. It is difficult to know why this is the case, but there may be officers who do not understand the importance of providing interpreting for those uncomfortable with English. It is inappropriate to rely on the client to supply his or her own translator, especially if this is a child or friend. It is pointless for local government to proclaim that "everyone should learn English". As residents, all members of the community have a right of service and to deny this is to deny citizenship. Clearly there is room for improvement and the examples of best practice identified in Chapter Four will assist those councils currently struggling with an appropriate response to the diversity within their area.

In the arena of community relations our research revealed a number of interesting practices of inclusion, particularly emanating from Community Services departments. Nevertheless, there is a poor level of officer knowledge of community relations policies even though respondent councils reported a very positive self assessment of their cultural flexibility and sensitivity in service provision. Council interventions into local community relations tended to be information provision-type projects such as festivals, fairs and media products. While these are important and legitimate actions, local government has not demonstrated a commitment to initiating community awareness programs which enhance levels of racial and religious tolerance. There is a lack of policies at the "sharper end" of the community relations spectrum. A disturbing finding of our research has been the failure of councils that reported being directly affected by inter-communal discord to instigate any official response. Ninety-two per cent of those respondents which had experienced serious incidents of ethnic or religious prejudice had not officially acted, and almost two thirds had not instituted an anti-racism policy or critically examined local community relations (see Chapter Five).

And yet it would be unfair to be overly critical of local government's response to the demands presented by a culturally diverse population. Our survey revealed that councils are under stress. They require recognition from both federal and state government of the excellent work that many are undertaking. They also require greater support from these levels of government. Sixty four per cent of the General Managers said that they needed much more clarification and guidance on the responsibilities of local government in this area. Many councils considered that they were taken for

granted and were often required to implement state and federal policies without adequate briefing or resourcing.

Councils cannot be expected to work efficiently and effectively in a poorly resourced environment, although there is also the danger that this can be used as an excuse for inaction. The survey has revealed that there are LGAs which have not responded to the needs of their communities. They must be assisted to not only recognise their responsibilities, but to enact policies and practices which will expand the usage of council services and facilities.

This monograph is one mechanism through which local government's work in responding to local diversity can be recognised. Inadequate responses can also be identified and remedial action taken. Those councils with a good track record in addressing cultural diversity have provided a wealth of creative and innovative policies and practices (especially in the areas of access and equity and community relations) which can now be shared by others. This is another key outcome of our research.

It is important to acknowledge that councils have different abilities to respond to cultural diversity. Even if a LGA has a small NESB and/or indigenous population, a response is still required. There are many common ways to respond, but each council needs to account for and incorporate its uniqueness. The task may seem daunting to smaller councils which have few ready-made models for implementation. Councils seem to take on multicultural policies and practices very well or hardly at all. Our study offers examples of policy and practice which can be modified and adopted by smaller and more remote councils. There is a critical need for systematic service models for small and middle range councils grappling with the implications of cultural diversity in their areas. Such models of policy and practice should be provided at the state or federal level.

All councils have a responsibility to institute a local politics of inclusive citizenship and social justice. In Chapter Seven we provide an overview of problematic representations of ATSI and NESB people which emerged from our research. This will help to raise awareness about the taken-for-granted assumptions that still persist in relation to cultural diversity throughout many layers of Australian society. Discussion in that Chapter focused on tendencies to represent certain groups as "them" versus "us"; common means of resistance to acknowledging the extent of local diversity; and examples of council structures and programs which could better address cultural diversity. Official acknowledgment of local diversity is a key step, as is the acceptance that multiculturalism is central to the "core business" of local government service delivery. Having formally recognised their local cultural diversity councils can then turn confidently to appropriate policy development and implementation.

Recommendations

There are a number of key recommendations which come out of this research. We list these under the different levels of government which we consider in the best position to implement them. There is however, overlap, and in some cases the recommendations involve more than one level of government.

Federal government

- That the current Federal Government affirm a continued commitment to multiculturalism and the cultural expression of diversity in its institutions and understandings of citizenship

- That the principles of Access and Equity Strategy initiated by the National Population Council and developed by the Office of Multicultural Affairs be maintained as an integral part of all federal governmental activities

- That further research assess the advantages and disadvantages of the current system of distributing federal funds to local government using disability weighting and special grants

State government

- That all states institute legislation along the lines of NSW's Local Government Act, 1993 that councils acknowledge and promote local cultural diversity and report annually on programs instituted to address cultural diversity

Across different levels of government

- That state and federal governments offer technical and financial support to local government in implementing multicultural policies and practices

- That all federal, state and local service providers continually monitor access and equity policy and practice, and implement mechanisms to hear and deal with client complaints

- That all government decision making and advisory bodies be composed of non-English speaking background (NESB) people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people at least in proportion to their constitution of the community

- That all levels of government continue to develop initiatives to address systematic discrimination and racism as well as continuing to promote positive portrayals of a multicultural society

- That local councils across Australia be acknowledged and encouraged in their efforts to incorporate multicultural policies and practices

- That local government's restricted financial capability be acknowledged and provided for when responsibilities are passed to it from other levels of government

- That increases in human service provision at the local government level be carefully budgeted for and supported by other levels of government

- That best practice models of multicultural policy implementation be developed for councils with low and middle levels of cultural diversity (to supplement the "best practice" models already being developed by councils with high levels of diversity). For example, councils could develop policies for offering translation and interpretation services in areas of relatively low demand. A service such as the Telephone Interpreting Service requires minimal equipment and training but can offer a highly flexible, expert and inexpensive translation service for a LGA with few but widely diverse NESB citizens

- That state and federal government recognise the need for a resources kit to assist local government implement culturally sensitive policies and practices (for example, state and federal government implementation guides; best practice policies and practices from different councils). Our survey has identified innovative practice, which is being promoted in this monograph. There can however, be a tension between sharing resources and being creative and innovative. Local government must achieve a balance between following general guides to service provision and implementing context specific policies and practices which are locally based and responsive

Local government
- That council "vision" and "mission" statements acknowledge and promote cultural diversity; that local illustrations of "people and place" be inclusive of the broad array of citizens living in or using an area

- That local government acknowledge that even low levels of diversity constitute some cultural diversity, and that policies and practices must be flexible enough to accommodate all citizens

- That annual reports offer current and accurate information on demographic profiles; that councils undertake ongoing, adequate and appropriate research (both qualitative and quantitative analyses) to ensure that they have an up-to-date picture of the levels of cultural diversity in their local areas

- That multiculturalism be seen as central to the "core business" of local government service delivery and integrated into all structures and programs as recommended in the Access and Equity Strategy (see Chapter Two)

- That councils move away from an ad-hoc approach to multicultural policy development and implementation. A systematic and institutionalised response is required to ensure that adequate and appropriate policies and practices are implemented and reviewed on a regular basis

- That councils be encouraged to break down the barriers between internal departments and take a 'whole-of-council' approach towards integrating multiculturalism into all policies and programs

- That councils allocate specific funding for multicultural policy development and practices (including staff training) in their annual budgets

- That equal employment opportunity be fully instituted to ensure that council officers are representative of the diversity of their local constituency and less likely to see certain groups as "them" rather than "us"

- That education programs in cross-cultural awareness be instituted for local government officers and councillors to emphasise the utility of multicultural policies and to ensure that all local citizens are acknowledged as one of "us" regardless of socio-economic or cultural background. Community Services staff can be used to train officers attached to other council departments in cross cultural awareness and understanding. Our survey reveals that community services officers are well placed to do this. They have a good knowledge of diversity issues as well as many skills in dealing with cross cultural situations. They have a broad based knowledge of their local situation, including ratepayers, residents, and the organisation in which they work. Some community services staff may require specialist training in education techniques (this could be provided by "train the trainer" consultants)

- That councils ensure there is substantial local community participation in the development and implementation phases of multicultural policies and programs to increase their likelihood of success; that all cultural groups in the local area be encouraged to participate in councils' democratic and consultative processes

- That councils commit themselves to developing better levels of communication both within their organisations and the broader community to enhance sharing of resources and approaches to helping NESB and ATSI communities

- That local government accept responsibility for developing strategies for improving inter-communal relations at the local level

- That local government enhance cultural expression by supporting local sporting clubs and grounds, and encouraging culturally diverse festivals, displays and heritage

- That councils support and facilitate education in cultural sensitivity and awareness for people living and working in their region. This will help to enhance levels of cultural understanding and

tolerance. As part of this exercise, council officers need a much better knowledge of the types and efficacy of the various community relations initiatives

- That councils consider some of the "sharper" forms of community relations interventions in order to grapple with inter-communal discord (see Chapter Five)

- That councils share innovative policies and programs to avoid the tendency of each council "reinventing the wheel for themselves" - councils should be encouraged to share resources at a regional level to improve multicultural service provision. The use of voluntary regional organisations of councils is one approach which has possibilities for improving efficiencies of scale

- That councils institute a regular systematic review of the effectiveness of Access and Equity and community relations programs

The way forward

The research presented in this monograph is an important measure of how local government is responding to multiculturalism and the needs of indigenous communities. Australia's cultural diversity is widespread and councils have a responsibility to deliver their services in an equitable and easy to access manner. Although our findings show a mixed picture, many councils are doing an excellent job. In sharing examples of best practice and appropriate policy development, local government will benefit from knowing how others are tackling complex and challenging issues. Federal and state government will also be able to give greater recognition to the work being done by councils and respond positively to the difficulties they face.

Our investigations have focused on council perceptions of the job they are doing in identifying and responding to the needs of diverse cultural communities. This is only half the story. In the next phase of our work we turn to the community to assess its perception of the adequacy of local government's response.

Appendix: Sample questionnaire

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND MULTICULTURALISM

QUESTIONNAIRE SECTION C
HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES OR EQUIVALENT

This is one section of a five part questionnaire. Other sections are being completed by the General Manager/CEO/Shire Clerk and senior personnel from town planning, health, and engineering/technical services. The aim of the survey is to gain a national picture of the types of policies and programs that councils have introduced to deal with local cultural diversity. The intention is not to evaluate the performance of individual councils and all replies will be treated in confidence — information regarding particular councils or departments will not be publicly released.

We have tried to develop a survey that is relevant to the diverse range of councils in Australia. Local government areas vary greatly in terms of size, population characteristics and resources, so some of the questions may seem inappropriate to your situation. Nonetheless, could you please try your best to answer as many of the questions as possible.

Q.1 Does your department have a budget allocation for the purchase of interpreting or translation services?

   1   2
[ ]   Yes   [ ]   No

Q.2 How often does your department use interpreting or translation services?

1	2	3	4	5
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
More than once a week	About once a week	Once a month	Rarely	Never

Q.3 Does Council provide access and equity training for staff in your department?

   1   2
[ ]   Yes   [ ]   No

Q.4 Which of the following interpreting or translation modes have clients used to access your department's services over the last six months.

	1	2		1	2
On-site interpreters	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Language identification charts	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
Telephone interpreter service	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Multilingual signage / posters	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
Bilingual council officers	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Multilingual pamphlets	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
Accredited language aides	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Multilingual letters	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
Dual handset phones at counters	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Community notice boards	[ ] Yes	[ ] No

Other. Please specify.

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Q.5 Has your department ever utilised multilingual material produced by other councils?

   1   2
[ ] Yes   [ ] No

If Yes, please specify the material and the council that produced it.

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Q.6 Does your department carry out regular reviews of who uses department services by ethnicity?

   1   2
[ ] Yes   [ ] No

If Yes, please briefly outline how this is done.

....

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....

Q.7 Does your department set targets for expanding usage levels of your programs by all groups within the local area?

   1   2
[ ] Yes   [ ] No

Q.8 Has your department used any access and equity implementation guides (eg. *For One and All*)?

   1   2
[ ] Yes   [ ] No

Q.9 On average, what level of understanding do the officers in your department have about the principles of access and equity?

1	2	3	4
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Excellent	Good	Poor	Very poor

Q.10 Has your department developed specific programs or services which target:

a. large ethnic groups in your locality?
    1   2
    [ ] Yes   [ ] No

b. small or "hidden" ethnic groups?
    1   2
    [ ] Yes   [ ] No

c. indigenous women?
    1   2
    [ ] Yes   [ ] No

d. elderly indigenous people?
    1   2
    [ ] Yes   [ ] No

e. women of non-English speaking background?
    1   2
    [ ] Yes   [ ] No

f. elderly people of non-English speaking background?
    1   2
    [ ] Yes   [ ] No

g. ethno-specific child-care?
    1   2
    [ ] Yes   [ ] No

Please outline the nature and success of such programs and services:

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Q.11   Please rate the cultural sensitivity and flexibility of your department's service provision.

1	2	3	4
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Excellent	Good	Poor	Very Poor

Q.12   Has your department initiated any programs aimed at raising awareness about local cultural diversity?

1   2
[ ]   Yes   [ ]   No

Q.13   Does your department provide support for local community arts projects?

1   2
[ ]   Yes   [ ]   No   If No, disregard Q.14 and go on to Q.15

Q.14   Does your support for local arts target funds to minority ethnic groups?

1   2
[ ]   Yes   [ ]   No

Q.15   Please outline any major community relations initiatives which your department has developed to improve awareness of local cultural diversity, and improve tolerance of ethnic difference (including carnivals, festivals, camps, house / garden competitions etc.)? Indicate the success of these programs.

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Q.16   Does your department provide support for local ethnic social clubs?

1   2
[ ]   Yes   [ ]   No

Q.17 Does Council provide free or subsidised use of council premises to local ethnic or indigenous groups?

    1   2
[ ] Yes   [ ] No

Q.18 Over the past five years, has your department had to develop strategies to deal with local outbreaks of ethnic discord?

    1   2
[ ] Yes   [ ] No

If   Yes,   please   outline.

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Q.19 On average, what level of understanding do the officers in your department have about the principles of the national *Community Relations Strategy* / *Community Relations Agenda*?

1	2	3	4
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Excellent	Good	Poor	Very poor

Q.20 When your department is developing a new policy or program, are any of the following consultation and participation techniques used?

	1 2		1 2
Publications	[ ] Yes [ ] No	Public meeting	[ ] Yes [ ] No
Advertising	[ ] Yes [ ] No	Research / project officer	[ ] Yes [ ] No
Polling / survey	[ ] Yes [ ] No	Focus group / workshop	[ ] Yes [ ] No
Public inquiry	[ ] Yes [ ] No	Consultative committee	[ ] Yes [ ] No
Discussion paper	[ ] Yes [ ] No	Advisory committee to Council	[ ] Yes [ ] No
Seminar / conference	[ ] Yes [ ] No		

Q.21 Please estimate how much client input your department uses when developing a new policy or program.

1	2	3	4
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Extensive	Moderate	Very little	None

Q.22 Has your department ever used a directory of religious organisations, or a directory of ethnic community organisations to identify community representatives?

    1   2
[ ] Yes   [ ] No

Q.23   Has your department instituted a plain English policy for documents and regulations?

      1   2
    [ ]   Yes   [ ]   No

Q.24   When distributing information about a new policy or program in which of the following sites, and to which of the following community representatives, would your department display or send such information?

	1	2		1	2
Council inquiry counter	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Social & sporting clubs	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
Libraries	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Religious centres	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
Early childhood centres	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Religious schools	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
Community centres	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Ethnic day schools	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
Child care centres	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Ethnic print media	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
Post offices / banks	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Ethnic radio	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
Health centres	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Ethnic organisations	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
Citizenship ceremonies	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Migrant Resource Centre	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
ATSIC Regional Council Office / Aboriginal Lands Council / Aboriginal Legal Service	[ ] Yes	[ ] No	Health care professionals serving indigenous people or people of non-English speaking background	[ ] Yes	[ ] No
English classes	[ ] Yes	[ ] No			

Q.25   What has been the local effect of State and Federal Government policies and programs on your council's ability to provide culturally sensitive services? (Take into consideration things such as access and equity, community relations, racial hatred legislation, social justice strategies, council amalgamations etc).

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Q.26   How many people are employed in your department?   ....

Q.27 What percentage of the staff in your department would you estimate to be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent?

.... %

Q.28 What percentage of the staff in your department would you estimate to be of non-English speaking background?

.... %

Q.29 Do you think there is a need for a statement identifying the various principles of multicultural policies?

1   2
[ ]   Yes   [ ]   No

Q.30 Do you think there is a need for a clarification of the role of departments in local government for instituting these policies?

1   2
[ ]   Yes   [ ]   No

Q.31 Do you have any further comments on multicultural policies and how they relate to local government?

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS SURVEY.

If you have any questions or comments about this research please contact Kevin Dunn, Project Director on (02) 93855737 or Neil Pfister, Research Assistant on (02) 9385 5023.

Please send the completed questionnaire and a copy of any documents that your council has produced which address issues related to multiculturalism to:

Neil Pfister
School of Planning and Urban Development
University of NSW
NSW 2052

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