

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 OCTOBER 2010

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(364) Program 6.1: Multicultural and Citizenship Services**

Senator Cash asked:

Please outline what the Department is doing to promote the benefits of a united and diverse Australia.

*Answer:*

The Department has a range of initiatives in place that promote the benefits of a united and diverse Australia. The Department's cultural diversity initiatives aim to promote social cohesion and provide an environment in which all Australians can participate in all facets of Australian life.

#### Diversity and Social Cohesion Program

The Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (incorporating the former Diverse Australia Program and the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security community grants) aims to provide opportunities for all Australians to participate in the community and contribute to Australian Society. This program supports initiatives that promote respect, fairness and a sense of belonging for everyone through projects that address cultural, racial and religious intolerance. It also includes projects which aim to build the resilience of specific communities who are under significant pressure because of their culture or religion.

On 15 February 2010, the government announced that 28 community organisations would receive more than \$1.2 million of community grant funding under this program in 2009-10.

#### Community Liaison Officer (CLO) network

DIAC's Community Liaison Officer (CLO) network specifically engages with ethnic and some religious communities around Australia to identify and manage community relations issues and support communities affected by domestic and international events. CLOs, located in all DIAC state and territory offices, maintain contact with many individuals, organisations and groups from Australia's diverse communities.

The CLO network acts as a conduit between government and communities to disseminate information about the range of DIAC (and at times other portfolio) policies relevant to promoting social inclusion and/or community harmony. The CLOs provide opportunities for communities to provide feedback to government about policies and programs.

## Harmony Day

Another way the Department promotes diversity is through Harmony Day, held on March 21 each year. Harmony Day celebrates the cohesive and inclusive nature of our nation and promotes a tolerant and culturally diverse society. Harmony Day aims to engage the entire Australian community, particularly schools, to promote and celebrate the benefits, both social and economic, of cultural diversity.

Harmony Day began in 1999, coinciding with the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and each year is an opportunity for all Australians to celebrate our multicultural nation.

Since 1999, a wide variety of groups including sporting organisations, community groups, local government, churches, schools and businesses have staged more than 25 000 Harmony Day events which have generated around 8500 media items with an average media favourability rating of 84.25 per cent. Nearly 5000 events were registered in 2010 alone.

## The Australian Multicultural Advisory Council

The Australian Multicultural Advisory Council, administered by the Department, advises the Government on practical approaches to promoting social cohesion, the engagement of migrants in Australian society, overcoming racism and intolerance and communicating to the public on this complex social policy area.

The Council consists of 16 members with a wide range of backgrounds, experience and professional expertise, and reflects a balance of ages and gender. It advises the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship and the Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Citizenship on:

- social cohesion issues relating to Australia's cultural and religious diversity
- overcoming intolerance and racism in Australia
- communicating the social and economic benefits of Australia's cultural diversity to the broad community
- issues relating to the social and civic participation of migrants in Australian society.

Throughout 2008-09, the Council developed its advice to government on a cultural diversity policy, informed by views of a range of stakeholders, including community organisations and state, territory and local governments.

On 30 April 2010, the Council delivered to government its advice -The People of Australia: The Australian Multicultural Advisory Council's statement on cultural diversity and recommendations to government.

The Government is currently working on developing its response to AMAC's advice.

The continuing aim of multicultural policy is to engage all Australians and to foster participation and inclusion.

### Access and Equity

The Access and Equity Strategy seeks to achieve fairer and more accessible government programs and services that are responsive to the needs, circumstances and backgrounds of Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse population. The aim is to improve effectiveness and efficiency of programs and services by supporting clients according to their rights to help them make the most of their opportunities and provide public leadership about the importance of inclusion, resulting in benefits for individuals and the nation as a whole.

The Access and Equity Strategy contains a framework that guides government agencies in developing, implementing, evaluating and reporting on their policy, services and programs. The framework is contained in the latest Access and Equity in Government Services Report 2006-08.

To strengthen the Access and Equity Strategy, from 2009-10 the Department is encouraging a greater focus on understanding and addressing the barriers to access and equity through increased community consultation and community involvement in improving programs and services. The Department is also increasing support for agencies to meet their access and equity responsibilities through the provision of advice and other ongoing guidance.

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

FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. FECCA is funded annually by the Australian Government to provide advice on the views and needs of Australia's culturally diverse communities and the impact of government policies on communities. In 2009-10 FECCA has been assisting the Department with Access and Equity consultations. The 2010-11 grant to FECCA is \$423 000 (plus GST).

### Publications and resources

The Department has a range of publications on the services it provides. In particular, promoting the benefits of a united and diverse Australia. These include:

#### ***Beginning a Life in Australia***

The 2010 edition of the *Beginning a Life in Australia* booklet is available on the Department's website in a new, streamlined format with a national scope.

*Beginning a Life in Australia* welcomes newly-arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants to Australia. It provides useful settlement information for migrants, humanitarian entrants, their sponsors and service providers.

The booklet provides unique resources for refugees and humanitarian entrants and has proven immensely popular, with the web page receiving some 850,000 hits in 2009. This information is available in English and 37 community languages and provides information on housing, employment and services such as English language training. The 37 community languages are:

|                       |               |            |            |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| Albanian              | Kirundi       | French     | Spanish    |
| Amharic               | Korean        | German     | Swahili    |
| Arabic                | Macedonian    | Greek      | Tagalog    |
| Bosnian               | Nepali        | Hindi      | Tamil      |
| Burmese/Myanmarese    | Persian/Farsi | Indonesian | Tigrinya   |
| Chinese (Simplified)  | Portuguese    | Italian    | Thai       |
| Chinese (Traditional) | Russian       | Japanese   | Turkish    |
| Croatian              | Serbian       | Karen      | Vietnamese |
| Dari                  | Sinhalese     | Khmer      | Somali     |
| Dinka                 |               |            |            |

### ***Life in Australia***

All applicants for a provisional, permanent and a small number of temporary visas are required to have read or had explained to them the contents of the Life in Australia book. Most temporary visa applicants are not required to read the book, but may do so if they wish. The book provides information about Australian history, culture, society and the values we share to help applicants understand the values statement.

### ***Australia – a new home DVDs***

Since 2007 the Department has provided a settlement information DVD for newly arrived African refugees and humanitarian entrants which is delivered as part of the Department's Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy.

The *Australia - a new home* DVD is available in six African languages (Sudanese Arabic, Dinka, Amharic, Swahili, Tigrinya and Kirundi) allowing new arrivals to review important information about Australia in their own language.

In July 2009 the Department launched a second version of the DVD for Asian humanitarian entrants. It is aimed at new arrivals from Burma and Bhutan and is available in Burmese, Chin, Karen, Nepali and Rohingya.

### **The Australian Journey - Muslim communities**

In 2009 the Department funded, developed and distributed a key publication The Australian Journey - Muslim communities. The publication, launched in November 2009, showcased the positive contributions of Muslim Australians to many facets of Australian life. Relevant research supported the need for such an educational product, based on the level of persistent negative media coverage of Muslim issues. Its distribution included schools, community organisations and governments, and it was generally received positively.

Further information on the Department's cultural diversity programs can be found at <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/>.