

First Annual Report 1979-1980 – AIMA

Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, First Annual Report 1979-1980, Melbourne, AIMA, 1980, pp 4-6.

Council of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs at 30 June 1980

Chairman: Frank Galbally, CBE
Director: Petro Georgiou

Council Members:

Michael Diamond

Louis Engledow, CBE*

Herman Huyer

Yolanda Klempfner

George Lapaine

Helen Lesnewski

Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki, CBE

*Replaced by Mr J Menadue on 8 September 1980.

Introduction

This first report of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs covers the period to 30 June 1980. It saw the creation of the Institute by Act of Parliament, the appointment of the Chairman, the Director and members of the Council, recruitment of staff, arrangements for temporary accommodation and provision of the working environment. At the same time, the Institute embarked on its first major research project designed to form the basis of advice to Government: a review of multicultural and migrant education in Australia.

Background

Migration to Australia, particularly in the post-war period has resulted in a society which is ethnically and culturally diverse. In a population in which one person in four was born overseas, there are now some eighty ethnic groups, speaking more than sixty different languages and practising a variety of religions. The

commitment of ethnic groups to maintaining their ethnic identity is strong.

Since the early 1970s, governments in Australia have come to recognise the needs and aspirations of ethnic groups and have begun to adopt a policy of 'multiculturalism'.

Multiculturalism recognises the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of Australian society and actively pursues equality of opportunity for all Australians to participate in the life of the nation and the right to maintain ethnic and cultural heritages within the law and the political framework.

Founding of the Institute

The Institute has its origins in the Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants, the members of which were Messrs F. Galbally, CBE, N. Polites, C. Stransky and Ms F. Merenda. This report recommended that the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs be established to prepare advice and information on multicultural developments and multiculturalism in Australia, including aspects of migrant settlement, ethnicity and the maintenance of the cultural heritages of ethnic groups.

Interim Council

An interim Council under the chairmanship of Mr Galbally with members, Professor J. Zubrzycki, CBE, Ms Y. Klempfner and Messrs M. S. Diamond and G. A. Giuffre, was established late in 1978. Mr T. Hogg, now a member of the Prices Justification Tribunal, had executive responsibility. The Council pays tribute to the Interim Council for providing a sound basis for the commencement of its operations.

Interim Staff

A number of departments and authorities loaned staff to establish the Institute, particularly the Public Service Board (Mr J. Addle), the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (Mr J. Pomeroy) and the Department of Finance (Mr A. Conheady). This willing co-operation resulted in establishment of the Institute in a timely and efficient manner.

Legislation

Legislation to establish the Institute was introduced on 13 September 1979, passed by Parliament on 22 November 1979 and assented to on 28 November 1979.

The legislation provides that the objects of the Institute are:

- (a) to develop among the members of the Australian community
 - (i) an awareness of the diverse cultures within that community that have arisen as a result of the migration of people to Australia; and
 - (ii) an appreciation of the contributions of those cultures to the enrichment of that community;
- (b) to promote tolerance, understanding, harmonious relations and mutual esteem among the different cultural groups and ethnic communities in Australia;
- (c) to promote a cohesive Australian society by assisting members of the Australian community to share with one another their diverse cultures within the legal and political structures of that society; and
- (d) to assist in promoting an environment that affords the members of the different cultural groups and ethnic

communities in Australia the opportunity to participate fully in Australian society and achieve their own potential.

[Section 5]

The primary functions of the Institute stated in the Act are:

- (a) to have a major role in providing advice to the Commonwealth Government on all matters relating to the achievement of the objects referred to in section 5; and
- (b) to promote those objects by -
 - (i) commissioning and conducting research and studies;
 - (ii) furnishing reports to the Minister;
 - (iii) making information available to members of the Australian community and to particular bodies, organizations or groups within that community;
 - (iv) conducting promotional and community educational activities; and
 - (v) establishing a repository of literature and other material relating to the diverse cultures of members of the Australian community.

[Section 6(1)]

In his Second Reading speech, the Minister stated that 'the provisions of the Bill have given the Institute of Multicultural Affairs wide powers to carry out its functions. However, the Institute will not overlap the functions of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs or of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal studies... [but] it is clear that a close co-operative working relationship with the various organisations involved in Aboriginal issues will be highly desirable...'