

Multicultural Plan
2013-2015



COMMONWEALTH
OMBUDSMAN

Multicultural Plan for 2013–15

Our vision for Multicultural Access and Equity Policy

The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Office) acknowledges that the Australian community comprises people from many culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and that we have an obligation to provide equitable access to our services to all members of the Australian community.

We are sensitive to, and aware of, the more particular needs and vulnerabilities of people from CALD backgrounds, and endeavour to ensure that our services are accessible and responsive, so as to ensure that they are afforded the same rights and privileges as are other members of the Australian community.

Our department or agency

The Office works to ensure fair and accountable administration by Australian Government agencies by investigating complaints, reviewing administrative action and providing assurances as to statutory compliance by government agencies.

To this end, the Office safeguards the community in its dealings with Australian Government agencies and related service providers by:

- correcting administrative deficiencies through independent review of complaints about administrative action of Australian Government agencies and related service providers
- assisting community members to resolve complaints about government administration action
- fostering good public administration that is fair, lawful, accountable and responsive
- developing policies and principles for accountability
- assessing statutory compliance by relevant agencies through inspections

Our Agency Multicultural Plan (AMP) supports our core business by ensuring that Australia's CALD diverse communities receive fair treatment by Australian Government agencies.

Our AMP

The Office's Chief Operating Officer (COO), Corporate Services, is responsible for our AMP.

The purpose of our AMP is to provide for steps and measures that the Office can take to ensure access and equity for members of Australia's CALD communities.

Focus areas for 2013-15

Two focus areas for the Office in 2013-15 are:

- social inclusion, and ensuring that issues relevant to those in greatest need are addressed
- that agencies have effective complaint handling systems, and are proactive and responsive to our feedback to them.

In the context of the access and equity needs of CALD communities, our Office AMP sets out our proposed activities to provide assurance to the public and the government that:

- agencies respond effectively to complaints about access and equity issues from people from CALD backgrounds and that their efforts to address CALD disadvantage are targeted and effective
- agency complaint handling systems take into account, and reflect, CALD access and equity considerations in their design, implementation and delivery
- agencies are adhering to access and equity principles in delivering services and programmes.

To this end, in the course of this AMP, we will focus on multicultural access and equity issues in relation to our own motion investigation into agency complaints handling and agency service delivery.

Further, our Office will seek to closely engage with key stakeholders, such as the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) to ensure that evidence based CALD perspectives are brought to our staff's attention and incorporated into our workplace activities so that our services are delivered in accordance with access and equity principles.

1. Leadership

Demonstrable and visible leadership by the Office executive will ensure that the multicultural access and equity commitments set out in the Office Agency Multicultural Plan 2013-2015 are fully realised and multicultural access and equity considerations become embedded as 'business as usual'.

Our broad objective is to incorporate our Office AMP into our strategic, planning and information documentation to ensure staff awareness of our Office AMP and the importance of CALD access and equity issues to effective and fair government service delivery, and to report to the Office's senior executive on our progress in implementing the Office AMP.

Minimum obligations

1.1 Executive accountability: Department or agency to assign a Senior Executive Officer to be responsible for implementation of multicultural access and equity obligations.

1.2 Department or agency commitment: Department or agency leadership to ensure that staff understand and are committed to multicultural access and equity implementation.

	Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:	Target:
1.1	Executive Accountability Allocation of responsibility for the Office AMP to our COO and our Governance and Business Improvement Team.	Ombudsman	1 May 2013	Executive decision to allocate responsibilities accordingly.
	The COO will monitor the implementation of multicultural access and equity obligations across the Office.	COO	Annually	Office access and equity obligations are monitored and reported to the Executive.
1.2	Office commitment The COO will ensure that staff understand and are committed to multicultural access	COO	Annually	Publication of appropriate messages to staff drawing

	and equity implementation.			attention to our Office AMP and any relevant or related stakeholder activities. All staff presentations outlining Office initiatives to improve capability in respect of multicultural access and equity principles and planning.
	The COO will report to the Office executive and senior management about multicultural access and equity implementation	COO	Annually	Review of Office processes and information to assess consistency with access and equity principles.

<h2>2. Engagement</h2> <p>Effective engagement and communication with CALD communities will assist us to better understand the needs of some of our clients and stakeholders while increasing their understanding of the work of our Office.</p> <p>Our broad intentions are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) develop and implement appropriate communication strategies and protocols to clarify with agencies our focus on CALD access and equity issues in relation to agencies' complaints handling systems (ii) refine our Office's approach to priority languages and translations for our Office information products (iii) enhance the amount and detail of information we have about CALD communities' access to services (iv) monitor and review our strategic engagement with peak bodies and use CALD stakeholder networks to effectively communicate our message.
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<p>Minimum obligations</p> <p>2.1 Stakeholder engagement: Department or agency to have an engagement strategy to understand culturally and linguistically diverse communities' interactions with department or agency.</p> <p>2.2 Language and communication: Department or agency to have a language and communication plan for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including on the use of languages other than English and incorporating the use of interpreters and translators.</p>
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	Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:	Target:
2.1	Stakeholder engagement Develop a media and engagement strategy to detail our communications and messaging to agencies about our CALD related Focus Areas for 2013-15.	DO	1 December 2013	Completion of agreed strategy, along with the dissemination of relevant communications and messages to stakeholder agencies.
2.2	Language and communication Review Office procedures and protocols relating to interpreter, translation and transcription services, and formalise into an Office Language and Communication Plan for information products in languages other than English and for the use of interpreter and translator service providers.	Director, GABI	1 December 2013	Completion of a language and communication plan for CALD communities.

3. Performance

By seeking feedback and measuring our performance, our Office will identify areas for improvement and determine how we need to enhance multicultural access and equity performance. It is important for the Office to know if our plan has been successful, what actions have been met and what needs further work.

Our broad objective is to develop an appropriate governance framework to provide clear benchmarks to assess our own performance relating to AMP outcomes, including mechanisms to assess and implement feedback from CALD communities about their experiences.

Minimum obligations

3.1 Performance indicators and reporting: Department or agency to develop a set of KPIs relating to engagement with, or outcomes of services to, culturally and linguistically diverse clients.

3.2 Feedback: Department or agency to have arrangements in place to ensure affected culturally and linguistically diverse communities are able to provide feedback on department or agency multicultural access and equity performance.

	<i>Action:</i>	<i>Responsibility:</i>	<i>Timeline:</i>	<i>Target:</i>
3.1	Performance reporting Review governance regime to ensure it provides for compliance with AGIMO accessibility requirements and CALD accessibility needs.	Director, GABI	Annually (1 September 2013)	Annual review of Office information and publications to ensure full accessibility within available resourcing.
	Office business lines to annually review services and products to determine if there is scope for additional access and equity initiatives to be undertaken or improved.	Senior managers	Annually (1 July)	Office business lines' annual access and equity reviews are conducted.
	Inclusion in our Office Learning and Development Framework specific training opportunities on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cross-cultural awareness • working with interpreters • communication skills for dealing with people from CALD backgrounds 	Director, F&HR	1 July 2013	Inclusion in the Office Learning & Development Program of relevant courses and monitoring of relevant staff attendance at such.
3.2	Feedback Structured reporting of feedback received from CALD communities and peak bodies to our Executive.	Directors, Ops	Annually (1 July)	Completed feedback reports to the Executive.
	Dissemination of knowledge and insights gained from CALD engagement and networking activities to our staff.	Directors, Ops	Biannually (1 March and 1 September)	Completion of all-staff messaging and /or presentations.

4. Capability

Investing in cultural capability and cultural competency within the Office will enable us to engage more effectively with people from CALD backgrounds. Our Office understanding of issues of interest to CALD populations will be improved through research and data collection.

Our intentions are to:

- (i) develop staff awareness about CALD access and equity and CALD disadvantage issues,
- (ii) provide clear procedural advice in relation to the use of translating and interpreting services, and their

capacity to improve our service delivery.

Minimum obligations

4.1 Cultural competency: Department or agency to have training and development measures to equip staff with cultural competency skills.

4.2 Research and data: Department or agency to collect ethnicity data on the culturally and linguistically diverse groups with which the department or agency engages and to which it delivers services directly or indirectly.

	Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:	Target:
4.1	Cultural Competency Provision and facilitation of training opportunities wrt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cross-cultural awareness • working with interpreters • communication skills for dealing with people from CALD backgrounds 	Director, F&HR	Biannually (1 March and 1 September)	Inclusion in the Office Learning & Development Program of relevant courses and monitoring of relevant staff attendance at such.
	Provision and facilitation of all-staff presentations relating to Office multicultural access and equity plans and activities.	Director Ops and Director, F&HR	Biannually (1 May and 1 November)	Delivery of all staff presentation(s) outlining Office initiatives to improve capability in respect of multicultural access and equity principles and planning.
4.2	Research and data Collection of ethnicity data on CALD groups with which the Office engages and to which it delivers services directly or indirectly.	Director Ops	Biennially	Collection and analysis of specific CALD related data identified in complaints and engagement activities.

5. Responsiveness

The Office recognises that Australian society is culturally and linguistically diverse. To achieve our business objectives, our services must be accessible, fair and sensitive to the needs of CALD clients and stakeholders. We will implement a range of measures to ensure feedback from CALD clients and stakeholders to assist us to review and supplement our approach to effectively support our CALD stakeholders and clients.

Our broad objective is to facilitate increased engagement activities to:

- (i) better target CALD members of the Australian community whom most need our help and better understand issues of concern about CALD disadvantage
- (ii) ensure that CALD communities are aware of, and can readily access, our services
- (iii) provide for greater consultation with peak CALD stakeholder or representative bodies.

Minimum obligations

5.1 Standards: Any whole-of-government standards and guidelines developed by the department or agency must address multicultural access and equity considerations.

5.2 Policy, program and service delivery: Provision to ensure that policies, programs, community interactions and service delivery (whether in-house or outsourced) are effective for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

5.3 Outsourced services: Where relevant, provision for incorporation of multicultural access and equity requirements into contracts, grant agreements and related guidance material of which the department or agency has carriage.

	Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:	Target:
5.1	Standards Office will promote awareness of, and adherence to relevant Australian Government standards and guidelines.	Executive and senior managers	1 December 2013	Office AMP published on website and relevant action included in our annual report.
5.2	Policy, program and service delivery Reinvigorate Office engagement activities to better target CALD communities and ensure awareness of our services.	Senior managers	1 May 2014	Implementation of Outreach planned activities.
	Ongoing and enhanced targeted consultation with peak CALD stakeholder or representative bodies.	Executive and senior managers	Annually	Regular consultation and liaison activities undertaken. Reporting to Executive and Senior Management of consultation and liaison outcomes.
	Use of CALD networks to promote awareness of our Office and of the right to complain	Executive and senior managers	Annually	Completed promotional activities and reporting to Executive and Senior Management.
	Review our Office web-pages to ensure that the information it contains is accessible to CALD communities	COO	Annually (1 July)	Completed review of Office web pages and appropriate remedial action (as required).
5.3	Outsourced services: Review and amend all guidance material related to ensure it incorporates multicultural access and equity requirements into matters over which we have carriage.	COO	Annually (1 December 2013)	All relevant material reviewed and amended.

6. Openness

Openness about our Office AMP enables our clients, stakeholders, other government agencies and the wider Australian society to see our commitment to multicultural access and equity principles. Our Office AMP will assist in ensuring our accountability for the equity of our services.

Our intention is to facilitate Office transparency and openness in relation to our Office's AMP by developing, promoting and reporting on instances of good practice by our Office and government agencies in relation to CALD access and equity issues.

Minimum obligations

6.1 Publishing: Department or agency to publish AMPs on department or agency websites and performance reports against KPIs for culturally and linguistically diverse clients in department or agency annual reports.

6.2 Data: Department or agency to make culturally and linguistically diverse data available to other departments or agencies and the public.

	Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:	Target:
6.1	Publishing Publication of our Office AMP on our external website	COO	June 2013	Publication of Office AMP on Office intranet and internet platforms by 1 June 2013.
6.2	Data Inclusion in our Office engagement activities of structured reporting to CALD community representative bodies.	All staff	As required	Inclusion of specific CALD components in our reports and engagement activities.
	Publication of annual précis of CALD access and equity issues, and our Office remedial suggestions.	DO	Annually	Publication of annual précis.

Executive = Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman
DO = Deputy Ombudsman
Senior managers = Special Assistant Ombudsmen
COO = Chief Operating Officer
GABI = Governance and Business Improvement Section
F&HR = Finance and Human Resources Section
Ops = Operations areas

Historical Examples of Office access and equity initiatives and actions.

The purpose of this attachment is to illustrate for staff the types of initiatives and actions the Office has undertaken in the past to address CALD related issues. Staff may wish to have regard to these examples when considering new initiatives or actions to further address CALD access and equity issues.

<p>Item 1 - Office wide access and equity provision</p>
<p>To address access to and equity issues in relation to the provision of our services for people from CALD backgrounds, the Office has for many years provided general information in 36 different languages about making complaints about Australian Government agencies. This information remains available in brochures and online. The Office's targeted and particular approaches in relation to specific responsibilities (see Items 2 & 3 below) complements this overall approach.</p>
<p>Item 2 - OSO multicultural access and equity activities.</p>
<p>The Overseas Student Ombudsman (OSO) function was intended to provide a complaints and dispute handling services for overseas students.</p> <p>When establishing the service within the Office, research was undertaken with overseas student support organisations and others to ensure that messages were framed in a way that was culturally appropriate for a range of language groups and that all 21 key language groups were catered for among the target group of overseas students in private education and training. The selection of languages for the translation of key information material was informed by this research.</p> <p>In addition to printed information, translated information was provided on a dedicated website and a range of contact options was made available including phone, fax, email and smartform (website). These specific OSO actions complemented broader approaches within the office to provide effective communications for people from CALD communities.</p> <p>The OSO also has been proactive in stakeholder engagement in the international education sector to promote the service to overseas students and encourage best practice complaint handling by private providers. This has included regular contacts with relevant state and federal government agencies and key provider and student organisations. It also included participating in key stakeholder events and undertaking targeted distribution of education and information materials.</p>
<p>Item 3 - Immigration Detention Review initiative</p>
<p>The Office has responsibility for reviewing the cases of long-term detainees. To ensure access to our services for those members of CALD communities in immigration detention centres, the Office developed new information material for display in IDCs that included translations in 11 key languages that corresponded to the 11 key CALD backgrounds of immigration detainees.</p>
<p>Item 4 - 2009 own motion report: <i>Use of Interpreters: AFP, Centrelink, DEEWR and DIAC</i> (No. 3/2009)</p>
<p>The 2009 "Use of Interpreters" report (http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/files/investigation_2009_03.pdf) examined whether agencies had clear and comprehensive policies in place to guide staff in the use of interpreters. It also considered the provision of staff training, a community language scheme for multilingual staff, record keeping, complaint handling mechanisms, and the way in which agencies address challenges when using interpreters. The Office identified eight best practice principles for working with interpreters against which agencies can assess their own policies and procedures.</p>