



COMMONWEALTH
OMBUDSMAN

**Multicultural Access and
Equity Action Plan**
2019–2020

Acknowledgement of Country

The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, culture and community. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

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What we do

Our Office achieves fair and accountable administrative action by Australian Government entities and prescribed private sector organisations, by investigating complaints, assessing administrative action and statutory compliance inspections and reporting. Our work has the potential to affect all Australians including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The purpose of the Office is to:

- provide assurance that the organisations we oversight, act with integrity and treat people fairly
- influence systemic improvement in public administration in Australia and the region.

We seek to achieve our purpose through:

- correcting administrative deficiencies through independent review of complaints about Australian Government administrative action
- fostering good public administration that is accountable, lawful, fair, transparent and responsive
- assisting people to resolve complaints about government administrative action
- providing assurance that Commonwealth, State and Territory law enforcement, integrity and regulatory agencies are complying with statutory requirements and have sound administrative practices in relation to certain covert, intrusive and coercive powers.

More information

Our Website: www.ombudsman.gov.au

Annual Report 2017–18: www.ombudsman.gov.au/publications/reports/annual

Corporate Plan 2018–22: www.ombudsman.gov.au/about-us/corporate-plan

Our multicultural access and equity vision

Our Office envisions equitable access to our services so all Australians, regardless of their cultural and linguistic background, are safeguarded in their dealings with Australian Government agencies and prescribed private sector organisations.

We uphold the cultural diversity principles of acceptance, action, belonging, equality and respect.

Our plan

The Multicultural Access and Equity Plan Working Group developed the Plan in consultation with staff across the Office.

Considerations

A person's cultural background may be constituted not just by their country of birth and/or their main language spoken, but a range of other aspects including their ancestry, citizenship, ethno-religiosity and faith.

The Australian Government Multicultural Access and Equity Policy

The Multicultural Access and Equity Policy is about ensuring that Australian Government program and services meet the needs of all Australians, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The policy contains six commitments essential to the effective delivery of government programs and services in a multicultural society: leadership; engagement; performance; capability; responsiveness; and openness.

Australian Government departments and agencies are responsible for applying these commitments to their work so that Australians of all backgrounds have the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, our society.

Access – means that barriers of culture and language should not impede the delivery of Australian Government program and services to those who are entitled to receive them.

Equity – means that Australian Government program and services should deliver outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse Australians on par with those for other Australians.

Commitment 1: Leadership

Demonstrate a commitment to multicultural access and equity and take responsibility for its implementation.

We all play a leadership role in ensuring that multicultural access and equity considerations are embedded into our organisational culture.

Item	Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
1.1	Develop and implement an Office Multicultural Access & Equity Plan (MAEP)	Diversity Champion Senior Assistant Ombudsman (SAO) Supported by MAEP working group	March 2019	Plan published on the Office's website Scope the creation of developing an accessible plan
1.2	Ensure the Office's commitment to multicultural access and equity is evident in key corporate documents.	Chief Operating Officer (COO)	Ongoing as documents are updated	Documentation remains current and incorporates MAEP actions where appropriate
1.3	Appoint an SES sponsor as a Diversity Champion to be responsible for the reporting on the implementation of MAEP actions	Diversity Champion SAO Supported by MAEP working group	Quarterly updates to Senior Leadership Group (SLG)	Quarterly status updates provided to SLG on MAEP
1.4	Promote awareness of and adherence to access and equity principles to staff	Diversity Champion SAO Supported by MAEP working group	Ongoing	Internal communication activities Promote celebration days that support diversity All staff meeting presentations Launch the MAEP on Harmony Day

Commitment 2: Engagement

Identify and strategically engage with CALD clients, stakeholders and communities.

Item	Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
2.1	Engage and work with intermediaries such as peak national bodies and legal aid services to assist in delivering services and key messages to their CALD clients about the work of the Office.	SAO Complaints Management and Education Branch (CMEB) SAO Strategy Supported by MAEP working group		Develop referral pathways from stakeholders to our Office. Track referrals from these stakeholders. Provide up-to-date, accessible information to Legal Aid services and other peak national bodies about Office services.
2.2	Liaise with government agencies and other oversight bodies on multicultural access and equity issues	SAO CMEB SAO Strategy	Ongoing	Have arrangements in place to facilitate a “no wrong door” policy
2.3	Increase our engagement with specific CALD communities based on research.	COO SAO CMEB SAO Strategy	Ongoing	Capture data on CALD complainants.
2.4	Consider CALD needs when developing Office media releases	COO	Ongoing	Media release process includes accessibility/readability step to consider CALD audience needs

Commitment 3: Responsiveness

Strategies are in place to ensure that policies, programs, community interactions and service delivery (whether in-house or outsourced) are responsive to CALD Australians.

Item	Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
3.1	<p>Budgeting considerations to incorporate costs associated with language services.</p> <p>Internal templates (for example outreach, budgeting engagement), to include clauses specifying multicultural access and equity accountabilities, such as the provision of appropriate translating and interpreting services and the collection of CALD data and equity costs.</p>	COO	Ongoing	<p>Update relevant costing / budgeting templates to incorporate access and equity costs considerations.</p> <p>Costing of any website updates or fact sheets produced incorporates language services (i.e. translating)</p>
3.2	Include multicultural access and equity considerations in the Office's complaint handling guides.	SAO CMEB SAO Industry	Ongoing	Updated work practices manual includes multicultural access and equity considerations.
3.3	Where appropriate, include representatives from diverse communities on advisory bodies, reference groups and working groups (i.e. Commonwealth Complaint Handling Forum).	SAO CMEB SAO Strategy	Ongoing	Representatives from CALD communities invited to participate and/or attend.
3.4	Ensure CALD needs are taken into account by staff in any role involving complainant contact	SAO CMEB SAO Industry SAO Program Delivery	Ongoing	All staff in teams with direct complainant contact have received training in use of interpreters and speaking to complainants from CALD backgrounds.

Commitment 4: Performance

Strong and clear mechanisms are in place to measure multicultural access and equity performance.

Item	Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
4.1	Track the Office's commitment to actions outlined in the MAEP	Diversity Champion SAO Supported by MAEP working group	March 2019	Develop and implement tracking document
4.2	Report to the Senior Leadership Group (SLG) regularly on commitments in Multicultural Access and Equity Plan	Diversity Champion SAO Supported by MAEP working group	Ongoing - Quarterly	Provide quarterly updates to SLG
4.3	Increase membership of MAEP Working Group	Diversity Champion SAO Supported by MAEP working group	April 2019	5 new members
4.4	Analyse CALD statistics to inform the Office's strategy to continuously improve on how it manages its operations and implements new functions.	SAO Strategy	June 2019	Capture CALD data in Resolve and complainant surveys
4.5	Review governance structure of Multicultural Access and Equity Plan working group	Diversity Champion SAO Supported by MAEP working group	February 2019 – Ongoing Annually	Ensure governance structure is fit for purpose

Commitment 5: Capability

Understand, and have the capacity to respond to, the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australia's population.

Item	Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
5.1	Cultural competency training for Intake, PCT, Early Resolution and Investigation officers.	SAO CMEB Diversity Champion SAO COO	Ongoing	Intake and CME teams receive cultural competency training.
5.2	Senior Leadership and Directors support and promote celebration days.	All SAOs	Ongoing	Multicultural events are conducted in all state offices. Launch MAEP at Harmony Day.
5.3	Promote staff's awareness of the Commonwealth Ombudsman <i>Multicultural Access and Equity Action Plan 2019-20</i>	Diversity Champion SAO	Commencement of plan	Regular intranet updates and events.
5.4	Conduct focus groups with CALD employees to discuss our culture, opportunities, support structures and leadership.	Diversity Champion SAO Supported by MAEP working group	Ongoing – annual	Insert CALD questions into the APS State of the Service to gauge whether CALD employees represented and supported.

Commitment 6: Openness

Be transparent in the implementation of multicultural access and equity.

Item	Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
6.1	Publish the MAEP on the Office's intranet and internet.	MAEP working group	March 2019	Intranet and internet updated with Office's Multicultural Access and Equity Plan
6.2	Report annually on our MAEP performance to the Department of Home Affairs for an annual whole-of-government snapshot	Diversity Champion SAO Supported by the MAEP working group	September 2019	Annually Provide an update on the Office's commitment to multicultural access in the Office's annual reports.
6.3	Seek feedback from complainants regarding the access and equity capability of the Office.	SAO CMEB	Ongoing as survey is delivered	Complainant survey includes a question on the Office's accessibility for people from CALD backgrounds
6.4	As appropriate, share resources, experience and strategies regarding multicultural initiatives with other departments, agencies and organisations.	Diversity Champion SAO Supported by the MAEP working group	Ongoing	Work with other agencies to share lessons learned

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More information

For more information or assistance about multicultural access and equity, please contact the Multicultural Access and Equity Section in the Department of Home Affairs by calling 1300 792 343 or visiting <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/multicultural-affairs/access-and-equity/resources>

