

POLICY:	LOCAL ETHNIC AFFAIRS PRIORITIES STATEMENT (LEAPS)
DATE ADOPTED:	Director Corporate Services & Finance's Report Report #1 Policy 5 December 2012 Council 6 February 2013 Minute Book No. 11477
ORIGINAL ADOPTION:	Director Cultural & Community Services Report #1 Policy 5 December 2007, Council 6 February 2008 Minute Book No. 10338
FILE REFERENCE:	09.00032
OBJECTIVE:	To outline the benefits of a culturally diverse community; a leadership role for Council in promoting and supporting cultural diversity in the Bathurst region; and ways for Council to facilitate community involvement in cultural diversity.

1 PRINCIPLES OF MULTICULTURALISM

The *Principles of Multiculturalism* are defined by the *Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000*. The four principles detailed in this legislation are:

Principle 1: Participation

"All individuals in NSW should have the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to, and participate in, all levels of public life in which they may legally participate".

Principle 2 : Respecting cultural diversity

"All individuals and public institutions should respect and make provision for the culture, language and religion of others within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the common language".

Principle 3 : Access and Equity

"All individuals should have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of and participate in relevant activities and programs provided or administered by the Government of NSW".

Principle 4 : Utilising diverse cultural resources

"All institutions of New South Wales should recognise the linguistic and cultural assets in the population of New South Wales as a valuable resource and promote this resource to maximise the development of the State."

2 LEGISLATION & OTHER GOVERNMENT POLICY

In 1983, the Community Relations Commission introduced the EAPS programme. An Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) is a planning document, which shows how an individual

government agency will address the needs of a culturally diverse society, according to its charter.

The White Paper *Cultural Harmony The Next Decade 2002 - 2012* defines EAPS as “a measure of agency performance where the needs of culturally diverse clients are fully integrated into core business, which in turn results in quality service delivery within the framework of the principles of multiculturalism and social justice obligations”.

For example, an EAPS usually shows how the agency will:

- deliver services, which are appropriate to a culturally diverse client group, as part of their core business;
- put in place flexible and inclusive consultation processes that are integrated into agency planning;
- provide training for staff on cultural diversity issues;
- provide language services and information in ways that will reach all clients.

The CRC monitors and assesses the performance of government agencies under the EAPS program. However, in accordance with amendments to the *Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000*, the Commission is also challenging agencies to do more, and to develop EAPS ‘good practice’, as appropriate to each of their agencies.

In 1995 the NSW State Government made a commitment to legislate for access and equity within local government. A Reform Task Force with a sub-committee on Social Planning, was established by the Minister for Local Government, the Honorable Ernie Page. The brief of this Task Force was to develop legislative and resource material instructing all councils to carry out a detailed social plan integrating issues relating to residents in specified target groups including those from a non-English speaking background. (Thompson *et al*: 1998).

This new requirement was given credibility as it was legislated in the Local Government (General) Amendment (Community and Social Plans) Regulation 1998. These amendments to the NSW *Local Government Act 1993* mean a Council is required to: “exercise its functions in a manner that is consistent with and actively promotes the principles of cultural diversity”, since 2000 referred to as the principles of multiculturalism.

Section 428, 2(j) of the *Local Government Act, 1993*, also requires local councils to provide in annual reports, details of programs undertaken during the previous financial year that helped promote services and access to services for people with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

3 BATHURST REGION DEMOGRAPHICS ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The Culturally diverse population in Bathurst

Population	BCC	Proportion	ESC	Proportion	NSW
Overseas born	2309	8%	455	9%	23%
Birthplace not stated	1391	5%	280	5%	6%

Overseas born – English speaking countries	1230	4%	304	6%	7%
Overseas born – Non English speaking countries	1079	4%	151	3%	16%
Overseas born arrived since 1996	331	1%	24	0.5%	4%
Overseas born arrived since 1996 from a non English speaking country	206	0.7%	Nil	nil	3%

- In 2003 the former BCC resolved that the City of Bathurst become a Refugee Welcome Zone. In taking this step Council recognised its past history with migrants through the previous Bathurst Migrant Centre. Councils commitment was to welcome refugees into the Bathurst community, uphold the human rights of refugees, understand their experiences and acknowledge that refugees can and do balance our cultural and religious diversities. Bathurst Regional Council joins forty four other local government Councils around Australia who have signed this declaration.
- There are four local multicultural groups and a Migrant Support worker in Bathurst.
- The NSW Chief Health Officer reported that between January 2002 and December 2003 half of the 7033 refugees originated from just two countries Iraq (29.2%) and Sudan (19.6%). The resettled refugee population is young with 36% of arrivals in this period being under the age of 16 years, very few were older than 65 years. The majority of arrivals settle in greater western Sydney a smaller but significant numbers are being dispersed to regional and rural locations, a trend which is increasing.

4 AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF A POLICY SUPPORTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The ultimate goal of a policy supporting cultural diversity is to make life better for the people living within the Bathurst region It is underpinned by a belief that positive change can happen and that desired results can be achieved. A lot of policy is general and it gives some idea about what is to be done as a general rule. It adds consistency in decisions, in behaviour and in the use of regulatory powers.

Good policy development gives citizens a chance to contribute to Council decisions about policies which affect their lives. Good policy informs Council staff about what to do. It also helps Council customers to know and understand what to expect. Written policy typically describes Council's position on a particular issue and related services and activities. It explains why Council has taken this position, how it is expected to happen and what the effects will or might be.

Few policies are wholly original or break entirely new ground. Most are connected in complex ways to other policies and plans.. This can include other Council policies such as Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and plans such as Council's social and/or cultural plan.

The overarching objectives of this Policy to support cultural diversity in the Bathurst region and comprise the principles of multiculturalism specified by the Community Relations Commission:

1.1 To review and update existing information on the current and future demographic makeup of the region and community needs identified within Council's current Social & Community Plan and Council's current Cultural Plan.

1.2 To support and promote the four principles of multiculturalism as set out in the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000.

1.3 To ensure that community participation in the development (and ongoing review) of the policy is encouraged, valued and included in the policy and Social Plan and Cultural Plan Action strategy outcomes.

1.4 To ensure that Council staff participation in the review of the existing policy and the development of a new policy document is encouraged, valued and included in the policy and strategy outcomes.

1.5 To ensure that the review of the policy and strategy involves a "whole of Council and whole of community" approach.

1.6 To produce an outcomes focused policy and action strategy within Council's Social and Community Plan and policy for the five year period, 2006-2010 which includes "built-in" promotion, evaluation and review.

1.7 To ensure ongoing commitment to the implementation of the Cultural Diversity policy and action strategy through linking it to Council's annual management planning process and linking to other relevant agencies.

5 METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING A POLICY SUPPORTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Council must facilitate processes which are aimed to be as inclusive and outward looking as possible and embody the principles of open government and positive participation.

In October 2005, Council adopted a Charter for a Culturally Diverse Working Group Committee as a means for community representation. The Charter is included at *Attachment A*. The Culturally Diverse Working Group has guided Council on the development of this policy. A draft document was prepared by the Group to help facilitate community consultation.

Broader representation was obtained through circulation of the draft policy document to relevant community groups, organizations and agencies. A forum was hosted at Council to consult with individuals from the culturally diverse community and the wider community.

Consultations with Council were also held to promote the draft policy and seek input, as the success of multicultural strategy hinges on the commitment of Council and its staff to both the principles of multiculturalism and to specific and initiatives and programs which emerge to support the principles. The consultation and information gathering process will be guided by the Working Group.

6 DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT

Bathurst Regional Council is committed to its culturally diverse community by promoting community harmony to make the region a place where people from culturally diverse backgrounds would want to settle and by providing services that will meet the needs of its culturally diverse citizens.

Specifically Bathurst Regional Council has identified through the local culturally diverse community, the following key commitments:

Commitments researched from other policies and communities include the following – these could be used to stimulate discussion and identify the key areas of commitment to the local community:

- Developing and promoting a profile of the diverse cultures in the community to improve cross cultural understanding
- Communication between Council and community
- Appropriate information formats from Council to the cultural diverse community
- Opportunities to breakdown language barriers – for council staff and community members
- Cross cultural awareness training for Council staff and community organizations/businesses
- Access to facilities
- Equal employment opportunities – within Council and promoting EEO in the broader community - workplaces
- Harassment and racism
- Improving community harmony
- Showcasing cultures
- Promoting benefits of a culturally diverse community

The list could be endless. The Culturally Diverse Working Group and Council can consult with the local community to identify what is important to focus on in the Bathurst Region.

7 LINKS BETWEEN THE POLICY & ACTION PLANS

The Bathurst Regional Council Policy to Support Cultural Diversity is the broad policy direction. It identifies the key principles of multiculturalism and key areas of support that the community wish Council to focus on.

The Policy will be used to guide the development of strategies in the Council's Social & Community Plan, Cultural Plan and the action plan of the Culturally Diverse Working Group.