
“WHY DIDN’T YOU TELL US?” “BECAUSE YOU DIDN’T ASK!”

CONSULTING WITH CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES
A GUIDE FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES



**Department of the
Premier and Cabinet**

Division of
Multicultural Affairs



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Written by John Apostolakis on behalf of the Division of Multicultural Affairs

DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET

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FOREWORD

South Australia has a unique and enviable history of pioneering democratic and social innovation and reform. Its reputation in this regard, and its progressive achievements, are recognised throughout Australia, and indeed the world. The South Australian Government is committed to equity of access to its services for eligible South Australians, irrespective of ethnic, cultural or linguistic background. The *Declaration of Principles for a Multicultural South Australia*, and the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* underpin this commitment.

The charter, formally endorsed by State Cabinet, provides a useful framework for departments and service providers for their operations.

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet plays a key role in ensuring equitable government services for all South Australians, manifested in part in the development of this consultation guide. The Division of Multicultural Affairs maintains a crucial role in the process of communication with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, which are now a substantial part of the South Australian community.

I am committed to the continued development of a whole-of-government approach to multicultural affairs. Accordingly, the state public sector needs to value the views of its clientele by consulting with people of diverse origins to gain first hand knowledge of their needs and concerns. The input of ethnic communities into the planning and service delivery processes of government agencies will help ensure that services are relevant and accessible to them. South Australia has an honest and committed public service which values very highly the principles of integrity and professionalism, and is therefore motivated and capable of achieving the desired outcomes.

I commend this guide as a tool for departments and service providers throughout the South Australian public sector.



Warren McCann
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET

INTRODUCTION

To ensure that government services are equally accessible to all South Australians, the public sector has a duty to be informed about the views of the communities it serves. Community views are crucial in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the services the public sector provides.

Every South Australian Government agency that provides services to the public must be committed to good client service to ensure quality outcomes. As part of this commitment, public sector agencies conduct consultations with the broad South Australian community.

It is important not to overlook any sector of the population, otherwise people will be deprived of the opportunity to contribute, and this will be detrimental not only to them, but to the public sector agency as well. It is therefore imperative, as part of any such process, to consult culturally and linguistically diverse communities to determine their needs and how best to meet them. Public sector agencies may then respond to them appropriately, and make adequate provision for resources, as an integral part of overall agency planning and operations.

This Consultation Guide aims to complement existing consultation methodologies, by providing a set of specialist tools which will enable the public sector to canvass the opinions of those South Australians whose cultural or linguistic diversity may not give them an entry into the processes of learning and decision making that result from community consultations. It is hoped that this resource will enhance the process of the public sector's evolution into a more inclusive, flexible, responsive and performance oriented body which will embrace a new culture of excellence of service to all South Australians.

I trust you will find the Guide both useful and informative. I would welcome the opportunity for your agency to work with us so that we can continue to improve government consultation processes and direct service standards for the whole community.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joy de Leo".

Joy de Leo
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DIVISION OF MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| About the Guide | 5 |
| What is Consultation? | 6 |
| Why Consult? | |
| Reasons for Consultation. | |
| Who Initiates the Consultation? | |
| Agency Initiated Consultation | |
| Community Initiated Consultation | |
| Perception and Intent | |
| Warning! Hazards Ahead | |
| Planning and Implementing Consultations | 8 |
| Types of Consultations | |
| Universal Consultations | |
| Representative Consultations | |
| Government Multicultural Bodies | |
| Network Consultations | |
| Program Based Consultations | |
| Target Group Consultations | |
| Consultation Strategies | 12 |
| Develop a Consultation Strategy | |
| Networks | |
| Established Structures | |
| Community Group Participation | |
| Staff Training | |
| Your Organisational Structure | |
| Partnerships in Consultation | 14 |
| Collaboration between public sector agencies | |
| Collaboration between government and non-government agencies | |
| Logistics (How, When, Where With Whom and With What) | 15 |
| Understand and Communicate with Culturally Diverse Organisations | |
| Consultation Overload Syndrome | |
| Contact | |
| Communication – Person to Person and Consultant to Group | |
| Where Will It Happen? | |
| When Will It Happen? | |
| Alternative Consultation Methods | 21 |
| Surveys and Questionnaires | |
| Discussion Papers | |
| Polling | |
| Research | |
| Conferences and Workshops | |
| Public Hearings/Inquiries | |
| Request for Submissions | |
| Use of the Internet/World Wide Web | |
| Value Community Input | |
| Feedback | |
| Outcomes | 24 |
| Data Collection | |
| Data Utilisation | |
| Freedom Of Information Obligations | |
| The Privacy Act | |
| Evaluation | |
| Ethical and Cultural Imperatives | 26 |
| Confidentiality | |
| Implied Judgment | |
| Self Esteem | |
| Appropriate Behaviour | |
| Gender Issues and Appropriate Sensitivity | |
| Hospitality | |
| Appropriate Behaviour With Children and Elders | |

ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide has been designed primarily as a practical resource, a tool to be used by public sector agencies and workers embarking on consultations with their culturally and linguistically diverse clientele.

It makes two assumptions about the users:

- that they may already be familiar with the community consultation process and need to know how to approach culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- that they may need to learn something about both consultations generally and consulting culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

It is hoped that it fulfils both functions.

The user is encouraged to read this guide as a whole at least once. After that, the user may refer to particular sections individually, as the need arises.

Feedback, comments and constructive criticism from users is encouraged and welcome. It is DOMA's aim to improve its service to the public sector, and if the need arises, this guide will be reviewed and reprinted in the future. Other publication methods to improve accessibility to this guide, such as web publishing or a CD ROM version, are being considered. All public sector agencies will be advised accordingly.

WHAT IS CONSULTATION?

Consultation is two way communication and includes exchange of information. Its goal is to determine the best way to improve a service or a process for the benefit of all parties to the consultation. Consultations can be initiated either by agencies or community groups, and can build short or long term partnerships, as the case requires, which will determine the nature of relations and exchanges between the community group being consulted and the agency which has undertaken the consultation. Consultation offers crucial insights into the concerns, needs and perceptions of the target groups. The agency can assess its community status, the target group's understanding of the agency's role and responsibilities, and the level of satisfaction, or otherwise, with the agency's function and its responsiveness and effectiveness in relation to the group's needs. It can assist to identify community needs more directly, with greater clarity, free of distracting peripheral issues and unaffected by diversionary tactics.

Why Consult?

To be effective and relevant in a culturally and linguistically diverse society, government departments and service agencies must operate through a set of programs whose design and implementation are informed by the concerns, ideas and demonstrated needs of the communities they serve, and the principles of Access and Equity.

The best conceived methods and ideas will only succeed after collective and collaborative debate and implementation. Consultation affords all recipients of services the opportunity to participate in, and influence the outcomes of, the social processes that affect their daily lives.

Aim

Consultation aims to achieve consensus between those who will be most affected.

The Reasons for Consultation

There are three reasons for consultation:

- Needs assessment; an agency can determine what the community's needs are and how best to serve them.
- To exchange information about the efficacy of the services and programs being provided, and allow the communities to put forward their own ideas and initiatives for consideration.
- To review, monitor and evaluate the reach and suitability of current programs and services, to explain new programs, and to identify Access and Equity barriers to which culturally diverse communities or individuals might be subject. For example, why are diverse communities not accessing services for which they would have a natural need, such as, say, employment services or specific health and welfare services? Whether the services are known, how they are marketing themselves and how they are perceived by the communities, might be the reasons for a consultation to be conducted in order to remedy the situation.

Those who are well informed will make better decisions and deliver better services.

Who initiates the consultation?

Consultations can be initiated by government agencies and departments, by community organisations and other (third) parties. Whoever identifies a need first, whoever has something important to say or to plan, can initiate a consultation.

Agency Initiated Consultation

A government organisation may decide to target a specific group for consultation on the basis of a set of selected or exclusive criteria. This may be because the group is subject to a set of circumstances or experiences which have highlighted an immediate, pressing need. Specific culturally diverse groups can be:

- Refugees
- Other new arrivals
- Victims and survivors of torture and trauma
- Women
- Youth
- The aged
- The disabled
- The unemployed
- Isolated culturally diverse communities
- Communities with a specific problem or issue that needs to be addressed either singly or within a larger initiative, such as gambling, substance abuse, high rates of suicide and various other issues.

The government and non-government organisations that are well placed to initiate consultations include:

- State, Federal and Local Government departments
- Government service delivery agencies

Community Initiated Consultation

Communities may actively seek consultation with government agencies in order to highlight an issue which they consider important. A very wide range of issues falls within this category. Communities would initiate the process of consultation through their own institutions, which would then lobby the relevant government organisations. These community institutions include:

- Ethno-specific or umbrella community organisations, such as FECCA¹, MCC²
- Clubs, sporting, social and cultural associations,
- Churches and other religious associations (Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish)
- Community based government funded organisations such as Migrant Resource Centres.

Communities might also instigate consultations through individual or collective functionaries with whom they are in contact and who, they feel, know their issues well and can be trusted. These can include:

- Community leaders (Secular)
- Religious leaders
- Community Settlement Support Services (CSSS) Workers
- Welfare Workers
- Community Development Workers
- Health Workers
- Other, “third party” initiators.

¹FECCA - Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia

²MCC - Multicultural Communities Council

Other organisations which may identify a need for consultation, are:

- Non-government agencies such as Church or Community Welfare Groups, Ethnic Schools, the Country Women’s Association, the Farmers Federation and Trade Unions
- Research and Education organisations such as The Anti-Cancer Foundation, The Heart Foundation, The Alzheimer’s Association and The Arthritis Foundation.

Perception and Intent

In order to achieve results and bring about real change, a consultation must be genuine. Any insincerity of intent would soon become obvious, damaging hard won reputations, partnerships and relationships, obliterating trust and breeding animosity. It could be detrimental to others’ genuine efforts to consult.

Just as important as the veracity and substance of the consultation itself, however, is the communities’ perception of the intent. The principles, guidelines, reasons for, and methodology of, the consultation, should be cast in such a way as to be transparent and convincing. Similarly, the “marketing” of the consultation must reveal the sincerity of its motives.

It helps when the prime motivator of a consultative process is an organisation – especially a government department. Any organisation or department that has to be continually lobbied for action, and carries out consultations only after much community agitation, may be judged as insincere, putting at risk its ability to effect change.

WARNING! HAZARDS AHEAD – Gates, Dead Ends, Pitfalls and Detours

It is in the nature of social organisation that there will be “gatekeepers” along the way, self appointed guardians and controllers who may try to control the norms and morés to which their fellow community members are subject, and which in many ways determine their relations with “authorities”. It is quite often difficult to move past them.

They may use or rearrange dynamics in an attempt to control groups or processes. They will do this for many reasons, but most often because they claim they know what is better for the community (and sometimes claim to having been authorised to represent the community) or because they wish to gain some form of prestige. They can actively pursue their own agendas, and, if not checked, they can derail the consultation process and divert its energies towards an inconclusive end at best, or, at worst, an outcome totally different from what was planned in the first place, or even total failure.

Most communities have such “gatekeepers” and “guardians” who may exercise some significant, if unofficial, power within them.

Sometimes, there can also be resistance from agency staff for any number of reasons; the task may seem daunting, they may be unsure about how to go about the process or they may have formulated a particular judgement. Staff resistance may be overcome by proper training.

Consultation Types and Methodologies.

There are several types of consultations, and the suitability of one or the other depends on a number of factors, such as the aim and purpose of the consultation, the size and location of the community or communities to be consulted, the availability of resources, special groups within the communities and logistical factors.

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities will participate more willingly, and make effective, qualitative contributions, in consultations conducted by organisations which have demonstrated a culture of awareness and responsiveness and have Access and Equity provisions in place.

The various types and methodologies of consultation can be summarised as follows:

- Universal
- Representative
- Government Multicultural Bodies
- Networks
- Program based
- Target group.

The aims, objectives and type of consultation will determine, to a large extent, the choice of methodology. Before embarking on consultation, be sure that the types and methods you select are appropriate for the issues to be debated.

Universal Consultations

Universal Consultations are large scale consultations conducted by governments and departments on specific issues which impact on whole communities or populations. These can be employment and unemployment, immigration policies and strategies, pension arrangements (especially for overseas born Australians) education and other major issues with universal implications.

Such universal consultations are advertised in various media, and are often required to report to a Minister or to the Parliament within a particular time-frame.

They aim to canvass the views of the whole of the South Australian community which, of course, should include the culturally and linguistically diverse sectors of the population. They use a wide variety of means to become informed about public sentiments, such as public meetings, talk-back radio, written or oral submissions, public hearings and other consultative strategies, depending on the scope.

Although the benefits of such a wide cast of the net can be substantial, an undertaking of such enormous scope and reach requires commensurately large outlays of resources and effort. This must be kept in mind if such a type of consultation is planned.

It is also natural that in such a broad, substantial catchment, the large numbers present would be more likely to include groups with diametrically opposed points of view which might create conflict. It is essential, then, that measures are taken to ensure that the outcomes which follow reflect majority opinion, are constructive and can lead to achievable goals. It is just as important to consider whether the consultations should be reconfigured with smaller focus groups so that debate is relevant and on track towards the desired outcome.

Representative Consultations

Representative consultations are conducted between organisations and peak and umbrella bodies which represent culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Peak bodies are usually ethno-specific, while umbrella organisations are coalitions of the former. This obviates the need to involve large numbers of private citizens in large scale, costly, universal consultations. It is predicated on the assumption that these peak, representative organisations have the confidence of their constituencies and have been authorised, or are at least expected, by their nature and status, to represent the interests of the communities for whose benefit the consultation is being conducted.

These organisations can be National or State, and can include:

- The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA)
- The Multicultural Communities Council (MCC) of South Australia
- Australian Refugee Association (ARA)
- Ethnic Broadcasters' Associations
- Federations of Ethnic Schools Associations
- Federations of various multicultural community, religious and welfare associations.

There are many benefits in consulting these peak and umbrella organisations. Their structure and methods of operation make them an ideal subject for consulting at policy and systems levels. They usually have capable management, and the human resources at their disposal often possess relatively high levels of management and public relations skills as well as relevant language skills.

Another major benefit is the store of knowledge offered by these organisations – knowledge informed by input from the rank and file of their constituents and affiliates. Additionally, many of the ethno-specific peak bodies are service providers in their own right, most commonly offering welfare services for their communities, and even aged care homes, and this places them in an ideal position to gather relevant information and experience which can be vital in a consultation.

The experience offered by these organisations and their staff, also means that they would be adept at developing conceptual frameworks and policy formulation and analysis skills, and would therefore be in an ideal position to condense the mass of anecdotal information they have already gleaned from their constituents, as well as the mass of their own experience, into a manageable anthology that would give an accurate overview of the situation at all levels without the impediment of a great wall of detail.

It is as well to remember that peak and umbrella organisations do not (yet) represent all groups, especially some new arrivals and refugees. That is not a reason for adverse criticism, but a recognition of the reality that these recent arrivals have other, more important priorities to attend to than presenting at monthly meetings of organisations, and have probably not yet formed associations of their own. Given time, this will change, as it did with the established culturally diverse communities.

However, the expertise and broad policies which the peak and umbrella organisations have already developed, would probably be able to take into account the needs and priorities of recent arrivals, thanks to their empirical familiarity with, and knowledge of, the settlement process. Their representation of new groups would then be quite valid up to a point.

It would be prudent, too, to approach service organisations which have a mandate to deal with new arrivals, especially refugees, immediately upon their entry into Australia. These organisations can be invaluable allies as they are amassing knowledge and experience on a daily, first hand basis.

The South Australian organisations in this category are:

- The Survivors of Torture and Trauma Aid and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS)
- The Migrant Health Service
- The Migrant Resource Centre (MRC)
- The Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service (MWESS)

The Commonwealth Government's Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) could also be approached, both because of its broad functions and because it administers the On Arrival Accommodation Scheme (OAA) which deals with all humanitarian category new arrivals.

Government Multicultural Bodies

Multicultural bodies of varying status and variable periods of existence or tenure exist at all government levels at various times.

In South Australia, the most important government multicultural bodies are the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission (SAMEAC) and the Division of Multicultural Affairs (DOMA) which functions within the Department of The Premier and Cabinet.

DOMA offers wide ranging expertise on multicultural principles and practice, especially through the Government and Coordination Branch and the Community Relations Branch. The latter is an important resource for both government and community organisations and ought to be approached during any consultation planning and process.

The Commonwealth may have some standing committees while other bodies may be of an ad-hoc nature. As policies and structures change, a normal process in government, some of these bodies may cease to exist, while others will be expanded or replaced with a new form. For that reason, it is beyond the scope of this guide to list such organisations, as they might have changed or ceased to function by the time this guide goes into print and circulation.

It is therefore prudent to survey the landscape to see what stands, what has been removed and what has been refurbished among these bodies. Research through the relevant government departments or peak and umbrella organisations will be the most efficient method. Some have printed directories of multicultural organisations and media, which are updated regularly, and may also be available on-line.

A number of State – Commonwealth committees exist which are concerned with matters of immigration and settlement. The settlement process is a long term question with a substantial number of attendant issues that need to be addressed by both tiers of government.

The major government committees are:

- The Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (SCIMA)
- The Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (MCIMA) which consists of state and commonwealth ministers of Australia and the relevant ministers of New Zealand.
- The Commonwealth – State Migration Committee (COSMIC) in South Australia.

All of the above can also point the way to other relevant multicultural bodies for organisations which are planning to conduct consultations. Of course, all decisions regarding immigration to Australia are made by the Commonwealth, and are implemented through the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA).

Network Consultations

There exist community-based networks which are made up of representatives both from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and service providers. Some of these groups may be of an open-ended and ongoing nature, with periodic changes in composition due to changes in the member organisations. They may meet regularly or only as and when required by their brief.

These Networks can include:

- The Transcultural Mental Health Forum of South Australia (NESBWEB)
- The National Immigration Forum (convened by FECCA)
- The Australian Council for Women (convened by the Office for the Status of Women)
- Multicultural Forums and Migrant Issues Networks
- CSSS and Migrant Workers' Networks
- Associations and networks of bilingual human services professionals and academics
- The Multicultural Youth Network (auspiced by the Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia (MCC))
- The Cross – Cultural Training Network
- DOMA's Volunteer Network.

Program Based Consultations

Some departments and agencies might have a specialist approach to their work. Their services and programs are targeted at specific culturally diverse community groups. In other cases, they might be funding other organisations or agencies to provide these services. A case in point is the Multicultural Communicable Diseases Program of South Australia, which is administratively attached to a non-government organisation and provides services directly, while it is funded by a government department.

Other examples are:

- Home and Community Care (HACC) a joint Commonwealth – State Program
- Domiciliary Care Services (DOMCARE)
- Various Disability Services
- Options Coordination (which includes Intellectual Disabilities and Brain Injury)
- Mental Health Services for the Elderly
- Community Refugee Support Service (CRSS)
- English Language and Literacy Services (ELLS)

The participants in these programs can provide direct feedback to the consulting organisation. Clients can provide anecdotal input and recount personal experiences with the program in question, while program staff can advise on their practical experience and better inform policy and systems development.

Target Group Consultations

As the name implies, target groups will consist of smaller, targeted sections of the culturally and linguistically diverse population, identified through a strictly defined set of criteria. Such sectors of the population may be women, youth, the elderly and the unemployed, or specific refugee groups, many of whom may be isolated or living in remote and regional areas.

Some may have developed social groupings for mutual support, while others may have advanced through to the organisation of tentative advocacy structures. Still others may be socially cohesive within their own community ranks, but are lacking any formal structures and have not yet sought out nor been approached by departments and services.

In some cases, the needs of these communities and groups are being met or advocated for by specialist organisations such as *STARS or MALSSA Inc.- Advocacy, Disability, Multiculturalism*. These agencies can facilitate consultations with specific target groups. Consequently, it is crucial to be particularly receptive and responsive to any advice that might be given by the workers of such organisations. “Early warning”, as it were, and a timely response, will smooth the road ahead and speed the process of addressing the groups’ needs in time to prevent a deterioration in their already precarious position.

Another way to target consultations would be to focus on specific language groups. Any of the numerous organisations and methods mentioned earlier will help you to achieve this by arranging focus group meetings. This method has advantages; however, you must ensure, as best you can, that a spread of participants is achieved, in order to minimise any potential bias during the input.

CONSULTATION STRATEGIES

Develop a consultation strategy

Consultation with culturally and linguistically diverse client groups, and the participation of these groups in government processes, is the best method to ensure that access and equity principles become reality.

Your organisation needs to:

- develop its consultation mechanisms at both central and regional levels
- initiate cooperative action with other departments or agencies which may have well developed consultation mechanisms already in place
- consult with Access and Equity client groups or other experts to determine the effectiveness of any existing Access and Equity measures in your programs or service delivery sectors.

In this way, you can consider the views of the target or focus groups at first hand, and make a better assessment of the impact of your programs and services on your client groups. Consequently, you may wish to proceed, confidently, to adjust the methods of your service delivery.

Networks

Your department can develop its own networks, or it can maintain, reinforce or expand existing consultative structures. Consultative mechanisms should implement both a generational and a gender balance, to ensure that all relevant views are heard, without one dominating another.

Collect, update and share cultural and linguistic diversity and immigration and settlement data regularly – it will facilitate targeting diverse communities and groups across all regions. It is vital that this data includes gender variables so that it can be cross-referenced to ensure that both sexes have equal access to programs and services.

Established Structures

By all means use networks set up by other departments and agencies, if your target group is likely to be a client group for these as well. This will conserve precious resources and save time and effort. If the other departments and agencies are also carrying out, or are planning to carry out consultations, costs and resources can be shared, and the target group will not be exhausted of goodwill nor will it be overcome by consultation fatigue.

Use established forums and structures, such as existing community organisations which represent the interests of cultural and linguistically diverse communities. These forums are invaluable resources and allies in the process of information dissemination and for conducting consultations. They are therefore worthy of support when and if time and resources permit. You can find out what these organisations are, what they are called and what they do, from guides published by both the State and Commonwealth governments.

Community Group Participation

It should become standard practice to invite culturally and linguistically diverse community groups to participate in developing consultation strategies. Their involvement at this stage will prevent the rise of unrealistic expectations. One can never assume that these groups are strictly homogenous; both women and men in these groups could have come from widely varying cultural, socio-economic, educational and even religious backgrounds, even though they belong to a particular ethnic group or general linguistic group.

Religious diversity may be due to sects within one religion (say Suni or Shia in Islam), or a variety of religions practised by members of a particular group. For example, Iranians may be Moslems or Bahai, Arabs are either Muslim of one sect or another, or Christian from the Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Antiochian or Assyrian Orthodox and Roman or Maronite Catholic Churches.

Linguistic diversity can exist because of differing dialects or even mutually unintelligible languages of the same linguistic family spoken among an otherwise generally related group. Kurds, for example, are one ethnic group, but speak three different Kurdish languages, as well as Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Turkoman or Kazakh depending on their geographic or geopolitical origin. The three Kurdish languages, while related, are not mutually intelligible. Some cultural differences will then exist among these groups due to the diversity within their own ranks. Over 15 languages are spoken by people from China, and 437 languages are spoken in India. Both of the latter are also hosts to a wide variety of faiths.

A good approach would be to gather as detailed a body of knowledge as possible about your target group or community. This will allow for detailed planning and lower the potential for any party to the consultative process to become disillusioned.

Staff Training

Staff training will provide workers with the necessary skills to consult and negotiate with culturally diverse groups and individuals. The training should include the following components:

- general cross-cultural training; what is multiculturalism, why is it important, what does it do for South Australia, what does it mean for your department and the way it conducts its business
- the needs, as well as the expectations and hopes, of culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- an appropriate focus on the above as they apply to new arrivals, refugees, women, youth, the elderly, the disabled and the isolated
- cultural expectations and the ways in which culture prescribes modes of behaviour, especially in terms of relations across genders, generations, other communities and socio-cultural dynamics
- the use of interpreters and other methods of cross-cultural communication
- the skills and protocols of negotiation, especially culturally and linguistically appropriate methods, which would be informed by the other components named above.

These staff training programs may be developed within your organisation, especially if you have staff development resources and expertise at your disposal, but will need to have the culture specific input provided by outside experts in cross-cultural training, or by the local bodies which represent the peak and umbrella community organisations. Alternatively, you may decide to have all the relevant training provided by experts from outside of your own organisation.

Your organisational culture

To foster trust and cooperation and create the kind of partnerships that lead to successful consultations and tangible outcomes, an organisation must possess, and must be seen by the communities to possess, an appropriate level of cultural awareness and the willingness to engage and to be responsive to their needs.

It is important for departments to familiarise themselves with, and formally adopt, the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*, and the *Declaration of Principles for a Multicultural South Australia*. These two documents will help you to review your service culture and realign it with the aims of the Declaration and the Charter, creating the conditions which would foster the collaborative partnerships that are a necessary prerequisite for successful consultations.

PARTNERSHIPS IN CONSULTATIONS

Collaboration between public sector agencies.

It would not be unreasonable to assume that there are probably hundreds of policies, programs and sub-programs in existence across all levels of government, in the Commonwealth, States, Territories and Local Government Areas, which affect culturally and linguistically diverse communities in one way or another. If only a fraction of this number decided to conduct consultations individually, communities will find it increasingly difficult to respond adequately, despite their collective interests, and consultation fatigue would be a natural consequence.

The most desirable course of action in this instance, and the most efficient and effective, would be to establish collaboration between the departments or government agencies which wish to consult. This would be particularly useful among departments and agencies having related, or complementary functions. In this way, managers and workers would be able to access each other's networks and share research and data, so that they can plan consultations across government and culturally diverse community organisations.

This type of collaboration will enable all participants to:

- check whether the information they need might already exist as a result of another department's consultative efforts
- share financial and human resources to organise and conduct consultations, thus lessening the cost impact and using resources more efficiently for greater return
- reduce the pressure that might be faced by culturally diverse groups and individuals
- exchange information and ideas about other strategies which could be or have been used successfully for other consultations
- enhance general information for mutual benefit
- learn about emerging and urgent needs which are not yet being met and so become better prepared for future action
- receive better and more direct feedback, and from a wider variety of sources, about related departmental and community initiatives
- share data and information and, finally, share in the outcomes.

Collaboration between government and non-government agencies.

Partnerships between government and non-government agencies are just as important, fruitful and effective as those between government agencies.

These partnerships would be with the peak and umbrella organisations representing the culturally and linguistically diverse communities of South Australia, as well as with ethno-specific organisations and non-government welfare services, such as those provided by Churches and community organisations. There is also a place for diverse community sporting, cultural, arts, religious and other types of associations to be partners in consultation ventures.

Here is but one example of government and non-government sector cooperation. The Department of Education, Training and Employment might wish to consult with the communities on matters of languages other than English in the state school curriculum. It can form a partnership with the Ethnic Schools Board, State Schools, the Curriculum Advisers who have been outsourced to private (community and education) consortia, and independent schools run by culturally diverse communities, such as various colleges based around linguistic, cultural and religious commonalities, some of which provide all grades of primary and secondary education (R-12). Other important partners in such a consultation would be the languages departments of South Australian Universities and TAFE Institutes.

Such a partnership would be able to consult the community, the schools and teachers providing instruction in languages other than English (LOTE) their students and their parents. The partners may also consult each other on selected aspects of their expertise.

This will ensure a comprehensive, well informed consultation process that would realise a high quality and achievable outcome.

LOGISTICS – HOW, WHEN, WHERE, WITH WHOM AND WITH WHAT

This section is a discussion of the practicalities of consultation. Here we will deal with the logistical aspects of conducting consultations; the methodology, mechanics, ethical issues, cultural imperatives and alternatives to the traditional methods of consultation.

The steps outlined below will help you to navigate your way around the sometimes sensitive and fragile terrain of cross-cultural consultations.

As mentioned earlier, consultation is a process of reciprocal communication and exchange of information whose goal is to determine the best way to improve a service or a process for the benefit of all parties to the consultation. Hence, there need to be appropriate mechanisms to achieve this.

By this stage, it will be assumed that you have identified both a reason for consultation, and the target group or groups you will need to consult. What now? The following strategies and methods can increase your chances of success.

You will need to:

- understand and communicate with culturally and linguistically diverse organisations
- make contact with culturally diverse communities, groups and individuals
- consult with appropriate methods, analyse data, evaluate the process and feedback, acknowledge the communities' input, and take action.

Understand and communicate with culturally diverse organisations.

Consultative structures and mechanisms are already in place in most, if not all, established peak representative and umbrella organisations, such as the Multicultural Communities Council, FECCA and others. Some of these structures might be new or evolving. These peak and umbrella organisations might have state and national conferences, as well as lobby and advocacy groups.

At another level, the interests of the target communities might be represented and advocated for by ethno-specific groups, migrant worker networks and special interest organisations such as multicultural disability groups, refugee aid groups and the like. Keep in mind that special measures might be needed to ensure the equal participation of women from these communities. Search out women's organisations to assist you in this respect.

Familiarise yourself with the structure of the representative organisation which you will consult or engage as a partner in the process. Some of these organisations, including a number of the smaller ones, may employ administrators and community development workers who will be most useful to you during consultations. These positions are funded by modest, but by no means guaranteed, funds from the Commonwealth. Some state funding might also be given. However, these modest funds could not possibly be sufficient to cover consultation costs. More often than not, these organisations operate with elected committee members and other volunteers who give many long hours of their own time.

It is therefore vital you do not put increased pressure on the resources, time and personnel limitations experienced by these organisations. Keep them in mind and work as much as possible within them, but always ensure that their participation is within their means and limitations.

Just as importantly, the value of the input of their paid workers, volunteers and office holders should be actively acknowledged and, in return, they should be encouraged and given all practical support that can be useful both for the consultation and for their continued operations.

Another valuable service that can be provided to these organisations in return, is assistance to form peak representative bodies where these do not exist yet. These can have a doubly beneficial effect – they can assist the communities and be of further use to government bodies in future consultations once they have developed their structures.

If you are making an approach to a group or organisation for the first time, and you are unfamiliar with any aspect of their structure or are simply unsure about how to approach them, contact people who may have contact with, or any connections to, these organisations. They may be able to help you understand their structures and preferred protocols. The people that can help you would be bilingual workers, Community Settlement Support Scheme (CSSS) workers, community and migrant health workers, the Community Relations Officers from DOMA, and workers from one of the peak representative or umbrella organisations.

In a wide ranging consultation, it is certain that new ground will be broken where little might be known about new, small and emerging communities – especially new arrivals, refugees, and the isolated. Here, those conducting the consultation will need to display particular sensitivity – one more reason why people who may already have contact with these groups should be sought out for advice first.

In cities and large regional centres, this will be relatively easy to accomplish, as the organisations which serve the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities are also situated there. It is very difficult, though, to accomplish such contact in rural and remote areas, as such assistance is usually not available in these regions. In such cases, you will need to think creatively and act innovatively.

Your efforts to include culturally diverse community representatives in the development and evaluation of policies, programs and services, even in the face of the difficulties outlined above, will generate a great deal of goodwill, mutual understanding, trust and a willingness to cooperate in the future. The process of consultation and policy formulation should be a dynamic process of development in which there is integral input by the communities it will affect, in partnership with those government workers who possess the expertise to shape this input into policy, programs and services. Ultimately, there will come a time when these partnerships will lead to more efficiently conducted, less costly and more productive consultations.

When you approach a community group or organisation to instigate a consultative process, first make sure that the strategies you choose will result in identifiable outcomes, and at that no stage must you allow the impression to develop that the consultation is a token gesture. Keep in mind that culturally diverse communities have often expressed disillusionment about various consultations in the past.

- Some have said they were overloaded by consultations and “consultation fatigue” was a direct result.
- Consultations had been conducted after decisions had been made by the “authorities”. This created intense resentment and made future consultations very difficult.
- Communities and groups did not receive feedback about subsequent or proposed action.
- Communities and organisations were expected to provide quality input, yet they did not have the necessary financial and human resources to do this and perceived that they were under unreasonable pressure. By the same token, government departments and other bodies conducting the consultations have been frustrated by:
- Consultations that were not representative of all the groups and communities targeted.
- Participants who used the opportunity to promote their own issues and agendas.
- Participants who have never acknowledged departments’ initiatives, achievements and improvements to services and programs.

It is an unfortunate reality that in the latter examples, there is not much, if anything, that a government department can do, other than to conduct a public relations or information campaign to redress the imbalance of the fact; though this may not warrant the effort and expense. In the case of the former, though, it is within the power of a government department or agency to plan effectively, research its target group and conduct its consultations in the most appropriate manner and with its intentions clear from the very start. If it has done its job properly, the department would not give valid cause to the communities to express dissatisfaction.

Consultation Overload Syndrome

South Australian Government Departments and service providers should initiate partnerships with culturally diverse communities in order to coordinate consultation processes with them. The partnerships should encompass the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation stages. The most appropriate arrangements are likely to be those that are continuing and open-ended, affording flexibility to all participants and partners.

Whatever type of consultation becomes necessary for your purposes, existing networks that you may have initiated and cultivated over time may be ideally placed to facilitate some of your planned consultation activities. If you include culturally diverse communities in the planning stages of the consultations, you can minimise to a very great extent their sense of being overcome by consultation overload.

For these reasons, you should ensure that your service, program and information exchange responsibilities extend to your partners, but only as much as is necessary for them to participate appropriately. As a positive offshoot, the organisation of ongoing consultations, monitoring the implementation of decisions, programs and services, and evaluating progress and the effectiveness of the outcomes, would become a more ordered and efficient process.

Contact

Your department has decided to consult with culturally diverse communities. Where are your targets, how do you find them and how do you engage? Firstly, it needs to be said up front that you need to be practical, realistic and flexible. That is the only way to achieve beneficial outcomes while responding to often complex situations which may sometimes be unforeseen.

There are a number of methods you can use to identify your target group

- You may have identified a group or groups through the conduct of your normal business.
- You can consult the National Bureau of Statistics or a Census to identify groups which fit a set of criteria that is the basis for your consultation.

- Agencies which refer clients to your department may approach you with a concern that your services are not reaching particular groups or individuals within communities.
- You are in contact with multicultural peak representative or umbrella organisations which point out a need.
- You may decide to undertake periodic consultations as part of your obligations under Access and Equity requirements, the Declaration of Principles for a Multicultural South Australia, or the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society.
- A third party has approached your organisation and pointed out a particular need.

The established groups and mechanisms that were discussed earlier, will be your most useful partners and tools in the organisation and conduct of a consultation. You will need to consult widely in order to reach the target groups and individuals you have identified, and in the process you may break new ground where you may encounter unfamiliar, unusual, unexpected and frequently challenging situations – hence the need to be flexible. Those same groups can help you to make contact with your intended participants.

Flexibility will foster understanding between you and your target group, and a willingness to participate and cooperate.

To be flexible, you should:

- Keep an open mind in unfamiliar situations
- Be alert to the different ways people interact, within their communities and with others
- Make an effort to understand the particular protocols of culturally diverse groups
- Empathise with, and understand, those who have experienced great traumas in their lives
- Respect, and try to work with, the groups' concepts of time, pace and priorities
- Be aware of how you and your role are perceived by the communities, and the possible impact this perception may have on the processes and outcomes of the consultation
- Start your approach by looking at the similarities that unite you and your target group as people, not just the differences that distinguish you from each other
- Be aware that gender roles and age dynamics may differ, and so you may need to organise separate consultative groups, (ie women only, or age group specific)
- Research the religious organisation of the target group, as you may need to organise discrete consultative groups within the one community according to faith
- Be willing to provide information and be seen to do so freely, although always within the permissible departmental limits
- Actively encourage and seek input from the group members
- Be aware that some culturally diverse groups and communities may mistrust the motives of government representatives – but that that is not necessarily a reflection on you; it may be the result of their prior experiences with the regimes and authorities in their places of origin
- Accept, difficult as it may be, that there are those who will not respond to consultation, outreach, or attempts at negotiation
- Watch out for detours and gatekeepers
- Be willing to adapt and to learn
- Be consistent and reliable.

There are no rules set in stone about what works and what doesn't work in complex and difficult circumstances or situations that are new or alien. There can only be some generally acceptable conventions. The question of what can or does work best has to be decided in partnership with the target group.

Seek out the experiences of other government departments or agencies which conducted consultations with similar target groups in the past. If no such prior experience exists in relation to a particular group, the best course of action is to seek the opinion and assistance of respected agency workers and members of those groups.

It is essential not to form stereotypical views about the beliefs and behaviour patterns of culturally and linguistically diverse communities – this will colour any approach to consultation. There are many differentials inherent in any community. Diversity does not describe only the ethnic and cultural mix of a country. The most ethnically homogenous group can be significantly diverse in terms of cultures, subcultures, regionally based cultural and linguistic variations, social and gender roles and dynamics, religious following, socio-economic status and a host of other factors.

However, you should be aware of, and sensitive to, the following points:

- Be especially careful when you want to initiate contact with women from some culturally diverse communities and religious groupings. There are usually quite distinct, and sometimes strict and rigorously enforced gender roles and codes of behaviour for women within those communities – especially so in the case of any relations or contact with males outside of the women's immediate families.

- Some cultures value loyalty to people very strongly, either towards individuals or collectives, and this may shape the nature of the relations between the target group and the consultation workers, and possibly lead to the expectation of outcomes other than those desired by the consultative process.
- There may also be precise protocols in place about the correct behaviour to be displayed towards the elderly, the young and small children – such as how the elderly may be approached or addressed, and how one may speak to, hold, touch, or otherwise relate to children.
- “Personal space” varies greatly from culture to culture and person to person.
- Some communities and groups may not wish to input directly, but they may prefer to go through an “intermediary” (usually one of their own choosing) who is respected and trusted by the larger community – but it may not necessarily be a member of that community. There have been occasions when teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) or other teachers, community and health workers and even local council workers have been asked to be “go-betweens”. It is better to foster and nurture such methods, than to dismiss or circumvent them. They may be your only conduit.
- Spiritual and religious leaders may be key intermediaries, but only to the extent that they might recognise that not all of their fellow community members actively practise the faith and, consequently, not all their views will apply for all of the people all of the time.
- Leaders in some community groups may not hold positions of formal authority, but may exercise significant influence. How might this shape the input? Will it truly reflect the majority views of the target group, or will it be filtered through the leaders’ influence?
- Sometimes, some leaders lose the confidence or the support of their communities in the process of community politics. Again, you must seriously consider what effect this will have on the veracity, validity and quality of input if these leaders are intermediaries or partners in the consultation process.

Once you have given due consideration to the above factors, it is time to contact the target groups. You can use any or all of a number of methods. If you have been acquainted with the leaders and workers from those communities or their peak representative and umbrella bodies, and your partnerships are organised, you can make a direct approach.

You may also choose to use multicultural community radio broadcasters, such as EBI-FM, Coast-FM, 5MBS-FM or SBS, or you can place advertisements in the ethnic press, which has good circulation in South Australia. Explain your purpose and the process to be followed fully. Remember, too, that you will need to conduct separate, women only consultation meetings, for either religious or social reasons.

Communication – person to person and consultant to group

The major problem faced by anyone conducting a consultation with linguistically diverse communities is communication across the language barrier.

In situations where you are consulting with community workers or members of the peak representative and umbrella bodies, there will not be a problem, as these people are fluent in English. The problem arises at the community consultation level. It is essential, then, that you plan for language services to be provided to the community participants who will need them.

Language services will take two forms:

1. Translated material for advertising, marketing, questionnaires and anything which needs to be provided in written form, as well as written feedback to the community group participants, evaluation material and the proceedings or final report and recommendations from the consultative process.
2. Interpreters to assist with oral communication between the community groups and the consultants during group sessions. The importance of interpreters in this process cannot be overstated.

Qualified, NAATI³ Accredited interpreters, who have passed rigorous testing procedures and are subject to a Code of Ethics, can be provided by the Interpreting and Translating Centre (ITC) which is a branch of DOMA. (Visit the ITC website: <translate.sa.gov.au>. See also entry in Appendices). There is a cost for this service, and it should be factored in at your planning stage. However, it is money wisely spent, as you will communicate with your group fully, accurately and appropriately the first time around, and not have to conduct costly extra consultation meetings later to garner important missing information.

The argument may be made that bilingual community workers or members may be used as interpreters, for a small cost or even at no cost. You must be cautious of any such suggestion because, well meaning as it may be, it is fraught with problems. The level of their bilingual proficiency may be an unknown quantity, and even highly developed bilingual skills do not always translate into good interpreting skills.

Bilingual workers tend to be advocates in their normal roles, and this is the opposite of an interpreter’s role. An interpreter is an impartial, unbiased, totally neutral facilitator of communication across cultures and languages, while in a similar situation a bilingual worker might be “steering” the process in one particular direction, to meet

the expectations of a different agenda. This is undesirable; but not unnatural, as the workers' loyalties lie with their communities and what they perceive the communities' interests to be.

³NAATI - National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters

It must be stressed again that gender issues are important in consultation meetings, and you will need female interpreters for the female members of the group. There can be no exception to this rule. This applies just as much to the consultation facilitators – women from some cultural and religious groupings can not and will not accept a male facilitator or consultant. Be sensitive to this issue.

There will be occasions when you are consulting with a number of linguistic groups at the same time. Here, you will have to devote special attention to the physical arrangements at the meeting place, such as the seating set-up, so that the interpreters can hear you clearly and interpret to their group, without disturbing the concentration of the other interpreters and language groups present.

The need for interpreters in regional and remote areas presents special challenges and requires innovative approaches. The cost of transporting interpreters from Adelaide would be prohibitive, and qualified interpreters are very few and far between in regional South Australia, with some possible exceptions in Whyalla and the Riverland.

However, interpreters can be accessed "on-line" from Adelaide, or from any regional centre, in two ways. One is a telephone conference set-up, which might be suitable for one-on-one and very small group consultations but has technical limitations which may hinder the process. The other is video-conferencing.

Video-conferencing has many advantages, such as superior quality sound reproduction and reach capabilities, it can be used for individual, small group or large group point-to-point conferencing or, through a "bridge" arranged through your telecom provider, multipoint video-conferencing between three or more areas. The cost is quite reasonable, especially when compared with the cost and time savings of not having to travel to remote areas. A video call made during off-peak times, will cost as little as \$28 per hour for distances up to 745 kilometres from Adelaide (for a two channel, 128Kb/sec data transfer model, otherwise referred to as "single bandwidth").

Video-conferencing has been used successfully for a range of tasks, including community group consultations with Kurdish refugees from Renmark, mental health interpreting for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Berri, geriatric and DOMCARE Assessments from Whyalla, Port Lincoln and Ceduna, training sessions for bilingual workers in regional South Australia and professional conferences, meetings and workshops. Interpreters were used quite successfully in all of the above community consultations and assessments.

The video-conferencing can be carried out via stand-alone units or through desktop computers, ensuring a very wide reach. Professionals and workers who have used this system expressed great satisfaction with it.

Video-conferencing facilities are in place in hospitals and community health services in Coober Pedy, Waikerie, Barmera, Berri, Loxton, Renmark and Paringa, Whyalla, Port Lincoln, Ceduna, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Murray Bridge and Mount Gambier. As well, all TAFE Institute Campuses in these and other areas have video-conferencing facilities that can be used. Adelaide sites include The Migrant Health Service, Glenside Hospital, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Telemedicine, Renal and Telepsychiatry Units, TAFE, and several other sites.

Your department may also possess such facilities already, which means that you would be able to call up any of the above areas from your own building. If you do not have access to such a system, TAFE will usually accept bookings for a fee, as might other organisations. You may consider purchasing such a facility for your department; purchase costs start at approximately \$20,000 for quality video-conferencing units.

If you choose to purchase, make sure you acquire a system that complies to the H.320 Standard – this means it can be used to communicate with other, different video-conferencing units. You will have a multi-purpose tool at your disposal which will be useful in other ways too, if your department has regional branches.

Where will it happen?

To be effective, the consultative process will need to happen in a space in which the communities and target groups will be at complete ease. This will usually be the space which accommodates their associations and institutions – club rooms, association halls, community offices and meeting rooms, and places of religious worship, such as churches, temples and mosques. It may mean that there will be some small logistical issues you will have to contend with from your departmental perspective, such as arranging transport for your staff, and possibly overnight absences with the attendant matters of accommodation, meals, and safety and overtime considerations.

You may only have to consider some of these matters if the consultations are being conducted in, or from, Adelaide and the metropolitan area. If you prefer to have face-to-face contact with your target groups in remote areas, instead of using video-conferencing means, your department's logistical and cost considerations increase accordingly.

You should remember to make allowances for community participants' transport arrangements and capabilities. How many own private transport and how many will have to rely on public transport? In the latter instance, timetables are a major consideration, especially after working hours and on weekends. Even more, transport in rural and remote areas is an especially difficult logistical problem to solve. Some regional centres have no public transport system.

An approach to local government, community organisations and service clubs might be fruitful, as some of these have community buses they may be able to put at your and the communities' disposal for the duration of the consultative process. This is mainly for groups, not individuals.

Keep in mind that if your chosen methods impose logistical difficulties on the target groups, they might not be able to participate as fully as they and you would like – some might even rethink their willingness. Remember that community organisations are not as well resourced, if at all, as government departments.

When will it happen?

The choice of time for consultation meetings is crucial to the success of the process. To make it easy for people to participate, and to maximise attendance rates, you will need to research the time utilisation of your target groups

- Are most members of the target group working? If so, what would be suitable times for them to participate in consultations?
- Are any new arrivals and refugees you may be targeting not in full-time work? Are they attending English classes? Can they be more flexible as far as time is concerned?
- How do you arrange time schedules to include people who are caring for children, partners and elderly relatives in extended families?
- Given the cultural differences in gender relations and roles, what measures can you take to ensure the equal participation of women in the consultative process? You will need to consider the women's ability to attend in the first place, and make arrangements, (such as creche facilities) to enable them to fulfil their willingness to participate under challenging domestic circumstances.
- Look at the target groups' social and religious calendar. There may be community festivals which might ease your approach to the communities and even offer a suitable time setting for consultations. There may also be religious events and observances that may preoccupy them, or even prevent them from taking part in anything else for the duration.
- In areas like the Riverland, Adelaide Plains, Virginia, Two Wells and Murray Bridge, you will have to consider the communities' busy schedule during different seasons, especially during vine pruning and at harvest times (which vary and are spread through the year depending on the fruit being harvested). Again, local research will be useful. Don't commit time and resources before you consider these things. If you need to, get help from the representative and umbrella organisations, or other government workers, to acquaint yourself with these aspects of community life.

ALTERNATIVE CONSULTATION METHODS

If face-to-face consultations with communities and their representative organisations are not warranted because your planned consultation has a smaller scope or focus, or you simply do not have the resources for that type, you have a choice of alternative methods.

Surveys and Questionnaires

Questionnaires, written in plain English and translated, where necessary, by qualified translators, are useful where quite specific responses are being sought on strictly defined issues, which can be expressed within tightly set parameters and language. They can give quantitative, measurable results, and are good for generating data which can be explored further using other consultative methods. Consider the usefulness of including key indicator questions, such as age, gender, preferred language, income levels, work/employment status, educational achievement and other aspects.

Be mindful that people's literacy levels can differ, and that even if translated, questionnaires may not be answered fully or even at all. You may like to target a group and have the questionnaire filled in by a qualified interpreter or a trusted bilingual community worker, in person or by telephone.

Discussion Papers

Discussion papers may be generated by government departments, service agencies, researchers, community workers or peak representative and umbrella organisations. They can be circulated among the stakeholders of the issue under discussion to be expanded with each contribution. They are useful mainly for administrators, managers, policy makers and community leaders. They are not usually targeted at the general membership of culturally diverse communities.

Polling (in-person or by telephone)

Polling resembles survey questionnaires only to the extent that it entails an approach to individuals so as to survey a larger collective by stages. Again, it would require a small, manageable number of questions which can be answered simply in very short sentences or, better still, a small number of multiple choice answers; examples are "yes", "no", "satisfied", "not satisfied", "strongly agree, disagree" etc.

The polling process can be carried out by bilingual workers or qualified interpreters at designated times and places, or it can be done quite simply over the telephone, provided the process has been well publicised and promoted so that respondents are satisfied about the veracity of the caller and the request.

Polling can also be done by "phone-ins", again after suitable promotion. The phone-ins can be to designated numbers on predetermined dates, or to telephone operators in an ethnic community radio station at a time when a program for that language group is being transmitted, and people can be asked to call by the announcer. This method has been used successfully in South Australia through Radio 5EBI-FM.

Research (previous consultation data, literature, research papers, conference proceedings)

There might be occasions when the scope of your consultation is very specialised and set within very restricted parameters. In that case, a research, review and analysis of previous data, literature, research papers and findings and conference proceedings, including any recommendations which might have been implemented, will suffice to help you achieve your preferred outcomes.

Conferences and Workshops

If your consultation requirements can be met by an exchange of information, knowledge and data with other professionals, service providers, government and community workers and policy advisers, a conference, workshop or series of forums may be a sufficiently efficient method to use. Selected representatives of stakeholders from outside of the professional and government bloc may be included in the process. This method has minimal impact on the resource capabilities of the communities but will, of course, place logistical demands on the participating organisations.

Public hearings/inquiries

Public hearings and inquiries have been used by government departments frequently, to canvass community input and gauge public opinion on a wide number of issues – employment and unemployment, welfare services, broadcasting and media issues and environmental concerns among others.

They can be a workable alternative as a consultative method, provided the purpose, proposed conduct, location and timetables are promoted and publicised effectively and widely, in order to maximise participation.

However, expect to get mostly community workers' and perhaps government workers' and advisers' input – these hearings are not an ideal vehicle for the individual members of culturally diverse communities unless they are proficient in English and feel sufficiently well equipped and confident to attend and put their view. Members of established culturally diverse communities who are in the professions (and are usually community leaders anyway) are more likely to participate and you should think about targeting them for their input.

Request for submissions

Individuals will find this alternative difficult for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is English language proficiency, but those with English proficiency, especially professionals, who can outlay the time and feel a strong enough drive, are likely to make the effort. Representative, peak and umbrella organisations can make submissions on behalf of their constituents.

The request for submissions may be circulated in the media, but culturally diverse communities should be specifically targeted by correspondence and other formal means through their leaders, boards and administration and welfare workers.

Use of the Internet/World Wide Web

New technologies such as the Internet and the World Wide Web offer methods which, while innovative and potentially far reaching, will assist only those who possess the technical infrastructure and the knowledge to use it.

Whilst this precludes some new arrivals, refugees, and people of low socio-economic status, it can be used effectively with those who do have access (such as some of the peak representative and umbrella organisations, government departments and service agencies) and these organisations can facilitate the process of “virtual consultation”.

For example, material can be put on the web space or e-mail service of a school that runs a new arrivals program, (such as Gilles Street Primary School in Adelaide) and this can then be printed or otherwise conveyed to the parents of the New Arrival Program students.

The same can be done through public libraries, the Adult Migrant English Language Program, Thebarton Senior College, MCC, MRC, STTARS and a whole number of other “hosts”. Suitably trained workers can then gather the input and direct it back to the consultative body. While this method has one logistical issue with which to contend (and given the ubiquity of the Internet and the Web and the widespread information technology infrastructure, this would not be too difficult) it has the potential to overcome a multitude of other logistical challenges and obviate the need for substantial outlays of funds.

Value Community Input

The fundamental principle of consulting and negotiating is to reach understanding and a consensus on how to deliver appropriate programs and services to culturally diverse communities. The main and oft repeated criticism the communities have levelled at organisations which have carried out consultations, is that some consultations were no more than a post-fact means used to tell them that a decision had been made and that it was final. Therefore, they felt, their views were not considered important; they were not valued.

It is important that departments value the communities' input – that is, after all, part of the process of informing change – but it is just as important that the communities which are consulted must perceive that their views are important, that their input is valued, and that it does influence the outcome.

Any consultation must not only pursue its own desired outcomes, but must build upon the positive decisions and outcomes of previous consultations, no matter whence those consultations originated, otherwise participants will fear the same old process and outcome all over again and will not make worthwhile contributions.

Serious debate of the communities' and target groups' input must take place, and participants must be allowed free rein to express their views (always within the agreed guidelines, agendas and parameters) and have them recorded in official transcripts for the record and for further debate.

A public relations strategy which expresses the consultative organisation's respect but, more importantly, keeps the participants updated about the progress of the consultations and any emerging ideas for action, would prove to be a most valuable display of appreciation, and proof of the value placed on the community input and the regard in which the communities are held.

Feedback

For the communities' input to be informed and relevant, and to build on the experiences and positive outcomes of previous consultations, there must be adequate, quality feedback flowing from the consulting government organisation back to the communities.

There should be unambiguous, decided timeframes set for the flow of feedback and for outcomes to become known. These ought to be developed during the initial planning process and should be agreed to by all the participants.

Feedback should be timely, so as not to impede the consultative process or the implementation of outcomes and recommendations. Feedback strategies should allow for maximum flexibility of methods, so that the needs of special groups are met. Many of the strategies which are suitable for accessing and communicating with special groups within culturally diverse communities are applicable to the process of feedback as well; language services, the minimisation of distance by technological means, literacy levels, socio-cultural and religious considerations, and navigating through the prevailing social and community dynamics.

Written reports which detail the outcomes of the consultation, or which keep participants informed of the various stages of the consultative process would provide an accurate, permanent and credible record of input and of the decisions reached.

They should:

- Acknowledge all participants' contributions
- Record the consultation process so that there is no future dispute or challenge
- Prove that all participants were fairly and equally heard
- Outline the decisions taken
- Detail, accurately, how the final decisions were reached.

It is vital that these reports are written in plain English, so that:

- All participants who are proficient in English understand them easily without having to negotiate a labyrinth of jargon
- When translations are required, the translators will have no difficulty putting the original plain English into a plain other language; this will maximise the communities' understanding and will avoid possible disputes or ill feeling.

The process of feedback should be managed rigorously, so that control is neither lost nor relinquished to anyone outside of those who participate directly in the consultative process, nor to any participants who may wish to utilise it for their own purposes. Plan for this during the consultation planning stage, and agree with your partners and the target group on who will manage the flow of feedback and how.

Accurate, written records, transcripts and reports are much less likely to be disputed.

OUTCOMES

The consultative process should lead to consensus, and consensus should lead to outcomes – that is the whole point of the exercise.

The long term practical outcomes depend on the action that policy makers, legislators and service managers will take as a result of the consultation's findings. The immediate outcome of the consultation will be a compilation of data which, used properly, will effect change in the area concerned.

Data collection

Data might consist of statistics, patterns, trends, cultural variables in service access, or any kind of information that determines the status of the target groups and communities in relation to your department's business. This can be called "aggregated data".

Other information might consist of opinions, advice or recommendations and, in some cases, personal information.

Data and information of a general nature that emanate from consultations with culturally diverse communities may be shared with other relevant government departments and community organisations outside of a consultative partnership, only if it has been made clear in the beginning that this may need to be done in order to progress, and the participants have agreed. A formal confidentiality agreement outlining a set of criteria upon which all parties agree would be a useful tool. Consider such an agreement seriously right from the beginning.

If participants ask that strict confidentiality is maintained about certain specific information or data that they have provided, this request should be honoured. All information of a personal nature should always be treated as confidential and should never be tabled in a public or open forum; the same applies where participants might have a negatively critical view about something but may fear retribution or loss of access to services.

The issue of confidentiality must be discussed in detail at the planning stage and when holding initial discussions with potential participants in a consultative process. The clearer the issue is for all parties concerned, the clearer will be the path of consultation.

At that stage, those who have misgivings, or who may hinder the process because they may not want to share information, can choose to opt out. Others may contribute more readily and productively once their fears are allayed. Do not record a name next to a comment or piece of information or data unless it is absolutely necessary, and then only with the contributor's consent.

Some consultation sessions are taped for convenience – it facilitates the making of transcripts later on, without too much time consuming taking of written notes. Photographs are also sometimes taken to be included in the record. *Do not tape and do not take photographs without the express permission of participants; and any such permission should be sought in the participants' preferred language and provided in writing. Concerns about confidentiality inhibit participation, and some personal and religious beliefs prohibit these methods.*

Data utilisation

The data collected belongs to the consulting organisation or partnership and to the community and group participants. The main purpose of the data is to help departments to improve programs, access and service delivery and to assist in forward planning, and even legislation.

Some of the non-government participants, such as peak representative and umbrella organisations may use the data to gain a better overall profile of their constituencies' needs so as to better represent them in future, and to support, with facts and hard data, their advocacy strategy when they lobby governments. Other groups may use this data to organise themselves in community associations.

The data, then, should be recorded in as simple a format as possible – perhaps in a variety of formats and media – to make it comprehensible to all those who may wish to use it but may not have the necessary data analysis skills or resources at their disposal. The need for absolute confidentiality still applies, and all potential users of the data should be made subject to a formal and binding agreement.

Freedom of Information Obligations

The Freedom of Information Act gives citizens the right to access official documentary information held by Departments, Ministers and Government agencies – information collected about them, in other words – except in cases where what is determined to be an essential public interest requires confidentiality to be maintained and exempts the material from the FOI rules. Information relating to State security and public safety, and the personal

71200 Dept. Premier Cabinet SA 1970/01 1109 PM Page 25

details of other persons, are exempt and cannot be requested. The right to access non-exempt information is legally enforceable.

This means that your target group will have the right to access your data collection and any other material and information that have been derived as a direct result of their input and participation in the consultative process. There are no foreseeable circumstances when material gathered during consultative meetings might be deemed to be of a nature that would exempt it from the FOI obligations, except where individuals or groups seek to access information about other individuals and groups, which may lead to conflict.

In any case, your department or agency should have an in-house policy on Freedom of Information, and that should be your first recourse during the consultation's planning stages and at any other time the need arises. If you haven't any FOI policy, you are required to formulate one. Seek assistance from the Attorney General's Department, the South Australian Police Department, (SAPOL) the South Australian Ombudsman and your own department's legal officers.

The Privacy Act

There is no Privacy Act in South Australia to safeguard information collected by government agencies and departments or by any private organisation, and to protect persons from any possible unauthorised use or leaking of this information. The Commonwealth Privacy Act (1988) does not apply to the States. However, the SA Cabinet has issued an Administrative Instruction to South Australian Government Departments, and this affords a measure of protection to South Australians.

It would be prudent to inform participants in consultative processes about the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, and how they can be protected by it, so as to put them at ease and to ensure that whenever their consent to something is sought, their response will always be informed. *By law, consent has to be informed consent, or it is not valid.* Advise them, also, of the measure of protection afforded by the South Australian Cabinet's Administrative Instruction and the SA Attorney General's Determination on privacy.

The SA Government has created the Privacy Committee of SA, which consists of four public servants and one member of the public, and it has given it the authority to monitor the implementation of the privacy instruction. The instruction, whilst not a law, is nevertheless policy developed at the highest level of State Government. It came into force on 1 July 1989, but for the purposes of implementation and breaches of the instruction, it applies to information collected before that date.

Under these circumstances, the best advice that can be offered is; gather as much information about Privacy and FOI from your and other departments, keep your team and your target group well informed, tread very carefully, and lean on the side of extreme caution.

Evaluation

It is essential to evaluate the consultation process and its methods and outcomes, to determine the success of the consultation strategy and identify its strengths and weaknesses. This will enable you to improve and strengthen the weak areas, and build further on the strong areas, for the benefit of future consultations you undertake.

It will also test the achievements of each of the consultation aims and the communities' perception of the process and its effectiveness. The evaluation should begin at the commencement of the consultative process and be framed in a way that will allow review and modification throughout the process. Beware the trap of creating an evaluation strategy that will be disproportionately bigger than the consultative process itself.

The key aspects to evaluate should include:

- Could we have done it better and, if so, how?
- Was the content and conduct relevant to the participants' needs?
- Did any participants express concern or dissatisfaction with the process? If so, why and what.
- Are the concerns valid? Could they have been avoided?
- Were the participants complimentary towards the process? Can we capitalise and build on this?
- What skills did we discover or develop?
- What skills were lacking and how can we redress that in future consultations?
- Do we need more training as facilitators, or should we engage specialists in the future?
- Did we get all the information and data we needed?
- Are the participants satisfied that they got a proper and fair hearing, and that their views will be considered seriously?
- Did we adhere to the agreed agenda and principles all the way, or was the process deterred or redirected by other agendas and interests at any stage?
- Finally, have we laid the foundations on which to build something better?

ETHICAL AND CULTURAL IMPERATIVES

South Australian Public Service managers, workers and contracted consultants, are obliged to consider their ethical obligations carefully and with the utmost attention to detail. Government professionals involved would be subject to their own professions' codes of conduct, as well as ethical guidelines and policies adopted by their departments or agencies.

Whilst a range of regulatory measures are in place to ensure that fundamental human rights such as confidentiality, privacy and protection are afforded equitably to South Australians, it is important to remember that all cultures are evolving constantly, and in the process carry with them a set of morés and prescribed cultural, social and religious codes of behaviour which they consider appropriate for their particular social arrangements and structures.

The moral codes of diverse communities are seldom, if ever, written, and those that are, are to be found in a diverse multiplicity of religious and philosophical texts. Their interpretation is the cause of much discussion and even conflict among members of the communities.

Government workers cannot be expected to be familiar with the specific protocols and unwritten codes of so many diverse cultures, but it is essential to remember that differences do exist. Particular sensitivity should be shown to the different roles of men and women within their respective societies, and those roles should not be judged, or challenged, on the basis of our beliefs and the functioning of our different culture, which is but one in a universal diversity.

If you are unsure about what appropriate behaviour or approach you should adopt, it is quite acceptable, indeed appreciated, to ask for guidance.

The following points may be useful to you in navigating the sometimes very complicated landscape of ethically sound and culturally appropriate cross-cultural consultations.

- **Confidentiality**

During the consultations, anecdotal information might be presented which might identify the contributor if it appears in the final report. It may also identify the persons to whom this anecdotal information relates. Such a scenario may lead to community conflict. If, for example, there is anecdotal information about the need for attention to issues of domestic violence experienced by a group of women from a particular cultural and linguistic group, the format of the information might identify, however indirectly, the women concerned or other women at risk. This will lead to tensions within that community, and may endanger aspects of the women's lives as well as the consultation process.

- **Implied Judgment**

A number of people of culturally and linguistically diverse origin are able to communicate adequately, or even quite well in English, and will be affronted if they perceive that consultants and government workers seem to imply otherwise, and make sweeping, generalist judgments about their ability to understand. Assess, approach and treat each group on its merits – do your research!

- **Self Esteem**

Many people of diverse backgrounds that you will encounter during consultations have reached high levels of academic, occupational and professional achievement in their countries of origin or elsewhere. They are bitterly disappointed that these are not recognised in Australia, forcing them to start all over again.

Consultation facilitators, workers and managers should show some empathy towards these people and acknowledge their achievements. If they contribute from a standpoint of academic knowledge and professional experience of their communities or the subject of the consultations, their opinions are likely to be well informed and should not be dismissed. They are not making pretences and are being genuine.

- **Appropriate Behaviour**

In many cultures, it is not appropriate to “get down to business” immediately. Social aspects take precedence during an initial period of acquaintance. Certain social formalities, rituals and niceties will need to be observed first. You need to be sensitive to this, so take a lead from the group.

- **Gender Issues and Appropriate Sensitivity**

In some cultures, you may encounter what you may consider to be a very traditional view of gender roles and status. You cannot allow your difference of outlook to colour your view or your approach to the task of consultation, but you will need to show considerable sensitivity if and when you seek personal information from women in these cultures – such as information about home life, health, relationships, and child rearing and caring practices.

However, it is advisable not to hold generalised views, which may in turn prove to be patronising and outdated, as some things and some individuals do change. This can be the case here. Women in some culturally diverse communities have broken out of the “traditional mould” and have advanced personally, socially and professionally, becoming more assertive within their own communities and in other situations. Again, you are well advised to research the demographics and social characteristics of your target group.

- **Hospitality**

If you decline an offer of hospitality, such as food, sweets or beverages, you may cause offence to your group or individuals – particularly where the consultation is an outreach into the community’s own domain. For many diverse communities, hospitality is both a sincere gesture, and a ritual that has to be strictly observed.

Similarly, you can offer hospitality in a consultative setting, but make sure you do not offer prohibited foods or beverages, such as meat and meat products that are not Halal or Kosher, and alcohol. It is safer to offer vegetarian foods with no animal fats at all, and sweets that are from the communities’ cuisines.

- **Appropriate Behaviour with Children and Elders**

Children

In many western cultures, it is a friendly gesture to tousle a small child’s hair, or touch the head, caress the cheek and stroke their arm. This is not acceptable in other cultures. If you are not sure, don’t do it. Many South Asian cultures abhor the touching of one’s head – it is not for a human mortal to touch the part of one’s physical being that is considered to be the closest to their Creator. They also dislike being looked at directly in the eyes, as they consider this to be peering into one’s soul

Elders and Respect

Elders are very highly respected, venerated even, in some cultures, and this determines others’ behaviour towards them. In the presence of elders, it would be unethical to concentrate on dialogue with younger people simply because they may be more proficient with English. It is sometimes the case that the young may not speak out until they are permitted to do so by the elders.

CONSULTATION CHECKLIST

Planning

- Clarify reasons for consulting
- Specify the objectives in terms of outcomes
- Select the most appropriate methods and types of consultation to achieve the outcomes
- Calculate costs, make allowances, ensure sufficient resources are available
- Ensure adequate lead time is available to all parties
- Research and plan communication strategies

Preparations

- Promote and publicise consultations
- Contact communities and invite them to participate in the planning and preparations
- Conduct briefing sessions
- Discuss costs, and, if necessary, negotiate cost sharing or other forms of contribution
- Agree on the agenda, facilities and tools needed to achieve objectives – documentation, speakers, venue, time and date, equipment, minutes, transcripts, record keeping, access to facilities for participants to enable their participation (transport, childcare costs or provision of creche)
- List tasks and timelines
- Allocate responsibilities
- Ensure flow of communication
- Agree on method and process of feedback and post consultation strategies.

The Consultation (Face-to-Face)

- Ensure all necessary material has been prepared and distributed
- Ensure everyone is clear about the evaluation methods to be used. Collect evaluation sheets
- Ensure all reports, minutes, audiovisual and written records are collected and processed
- Decide what follow up is necessary as a result of the consultations
- Make agreed feedback mechanisms known to all participants

Post-Consultation

- Finalise minutes and reports. Have them translated if necessary.
- Evaluate the consultation within the organising committee or body
- Provide feedback by the agreed method
- Plan future improvements with the benefit of the most recent experiences and hindsight
- Ensure feedback is followed up with appropriate actions, otherwise the exercise was futile
- Ensure feedback continues if action continues. Explain any deviation or why some participants' aspirations cannot be met.

APPENDICES



**THE
GOVERNMENT
OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Declaration of Principles for a Multicultural South Australia

Principles

The Government of South Australia

- BELIEVES** that all individuals are equally entitled to participate in and benefit from our democratic South Australia society
- VALUES** the knowledge, experience and skills present in our community that enhance the States social, cultural and economic development
- AFFIRMS** the right of all individuals to maintain, develop, express and share their cultural heritages within the legal and social framework of our State
- IS COMMITTED** to the principle of access and equity for all South Australians and to the prevention of the discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture.

Commitment

The Government of South Australia is committed to ensuring that all Government activities are inclusive of and value cultural diversity.

This means:

- PROMOTING** an understanding and appreciation of the benefits of diversity
- DEVELOPING** flexible and innovative policies and practices which are responsive to the needs of the whole South Australian community
- ENCOURAGING** the South Australians to contribute to, and participate in, all levels of public life and decision making
- ENSURING** that the public sector reflects and utilises the diversity of the community it serves
- ENCOURAGING** the development of language skills through education and in the public sector
- REMOVING** any unlawful barriers based on ethnicity, religion, language, race and culture which may prevent fair access to and outcomes from, Government services
- PROMOTING** through the network of various chambers of commerce and business councils, the development of export trade
- RECOGNISING** that the diverse cultural assets of South Australia are a valuable resource for the development of a stronger community for the benefit of all South Australians.

**JOHN OLSEN
Premier
Minister for Multicultural Affairs**

CHARTER OF PUBLIC SERVICE IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE SOCIETY

The Seven Charter Principles

1. Access

Government services should be available to everyone who is entitled to them, regardless of where they live, and should be free of any form of discrimination on the basis of birthplace, language, culture, race or religion.

2. Equity

Government services should be delivered on the basis of fair treatment of clients who are eligible to receive them.

3. Communication

Government service providers should use strategies to inform eligible clients of services and their entitlements, and how they can obtain them. Providers should also consult with the community regularly about the adequacy, design and standard of government services.

4. Responsiveness

Government services should be sensitive to the needs and requirements of different communities, and responsive to the particular circumstances of individuals.

5. Effectiveness

Government service providers must be 'results oriented', focused on meeting the needs of clients from all backgrounds.

6. Efficiency

Government service providers should optimise the use of available public resources through a user responsive approach to service delivery which meets the needs of clients.

7. Accountability

Government service providers should have a reporting mechanism in place which ensures they are accountable for implementing Charter objectives for clients.

DIVISION OF MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS (DOMA)

COMMUNITY RELATIONS BRANCH

The Community Relations Branch fosters the principles of multiculturalism and the value of cultural diversity by providing ministerial advice and working with ethnic communities in the areas of community liaison and development, the Premier's Multicultural Grants Scheme, community education, anti-racism initiatives, volunteers, ethnic community mailing lists and the Multicultural Youth Leadership Summits.

DOMA is a member of the Managers of Volunteer in Government Departments Network. The Community Relations Branch, under the auspices of programs the Volunteer Migrant Information Officer Network, hosts its regular meetings. The Volunteer Migrant Information Officer Network comprises bilingual and multilingual volunteers who are trained and supported to provide a direct information and referral service to members of their respective communities.

THE GOVERNMENT AND COORDINATION BRANCH

The Government and Coordination Branch advises the Government on multicultural matters and supports the Minister for Multicultural Affairs' attendance at the annual meeting of the Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. The branch coordinates whole-of-government initiatives relevant to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the State's population and undertakes associated research. It liaises with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs on matters related to multicultural affairs, and contributes as appropriate to local, national and interstate initiatives.

The Government and Coordination Branch convenes the Multicultural Good Practice Network meetings and advises public sector departments and agencies on the implementation of access and equity in the planning and delivery of services for a diverse clientele.

DOMA may be contacted at:

24 Flinders Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Telephone: 08 8226 1944
Freecall: 1800 063 535 (for country callers)
Facsimile: 08 8226 1955
E-mail: doma@saugov.sa.gov.au
Website: www.premcab.sa.gov.au

INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING CENTRE

The Interpreting and Translating Centre (ITC) is a branch of the Division of Multicultural Affairs. ITC was established in 1975 and provides interpreting and translating services to public and private sector agencies and to individuals in over 80 languages, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

ITC is the only interpreting and translating services provider in South Australia and one of only two in Australia to have achieved Quality Assurance Certification in the provision of interpreting and translating services.

Services provided:

- face-to-face interpreting
- telephone interpreting
- business and conference interpreting
- translation from English or into English
- translation of business cards
- summary translations and checking of translations
- certified translations
- word processing, typesetting, desktop publishing, proof reading, audio-visual production, voice-overs and subtitling
- free quotations and free consultancy service for translations

Seminars on how to work effectively with interpreters are available to all client agencies at no cost. These seminars provide an insight to the ethics and techniques of the interpreting and translating profession and assist client agencies in understanding various cultural aspects as well as facilitating effective communication with their non-English speaking clientele.

Interpreters and Translators working for ITC are accredited by NAATI (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters), trained by the Interpreting and Translating Centre and are bound by a professional Code of Ethics which requires them to: interpret accurately without adding or omitting anything being said; maintain absolute confidentiality; be impartial and objective and act in a professional manner at all times.

Monitoring of interpreters in on-going and it ensures that the service provided by the Centre's full-time and casual staff is of a very high standard. Feedback from client agencies is sought, welcome and acted upon immediately.

To obtain an interpreter 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, telephone (08) 8226 1990. Translations are accepted by facsimile, delivery, mail or e-mail. To arrange a translation Monday-Friday (8.30 am-5.15 p.m) telephone (08) 8226 1980, facsimile (08) 8226 1992 or e-mail itc@saugov.sa.gov.au

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES COUNCIL OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Multicultural Communities Council
113 Gilbert Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Ph: 8410 0300

MIGRATION MUSEUM OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Migration Museum
82 Kintore Avenue
ADELAIDE SA 5000

**Ph: 8207 7580 (Display)
8207 7570 (Administration)**

IMMIGRATION MUSEUM OF VICTORIA

Immigration Museum
GPO Box 666E
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

OR

400 Flinders Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Ph: (03) 9927 2700

Publicity Officer: Ellie Prodromou
