BUILDING ON THE TERRITORY'S DIVERSITY
GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE MULTICULTURAL POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are a reference or tool for agencies in the implementation of the Northern Territory's first Multicultural Policy, 'Building on the Territory's Diversity'.
These guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive.

2. THE MULTICULTURAL POLICY

Under the Multicultural Policy (MP), there are main principles that the Government has given a commitment to. They are:
- Valuing Diversity;
- Fair Access;
- Encouraging Participation; and
- Mutual Respect.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR AGENCIES

It is every Government agencies' responsibility to implement the principles set out in MP.
Agencies should aim to:
- operationalise MP in their portfolio through its inclusion in strategic and business planning;
- implement active consultative mechanisms to involve people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in identifying and prioritising needs and in planning service and undertaking delivery;
- support staff to attend cross cultural training courses to ensure they have the skills needed to work in a culturally diverse society;
- arrange for interpreters in circumstances where clients have difficulties communicating in English; and
- implement mechanisms to ensure that MP related strategies or actions are recorded and provided for inclusion in the Minister for Multicultural Affairs' annual report on MP.

4. FACTORS IN ACHIEVING SUCCESS WHEN IMPLEMENTING MP

Some keys to success in implementing MP are:
- beginning with the planning assumption that the community is culturally diverse, not culturally homogenous;
- adopting flexible approaches in response to client needs (rather than a 'one size fits all' approach where exactly the same service is provided to all clients irrespective of their needs);
- developing and implementing policies that are culturally inclusive (making sure that policies, programs and services are responsive to cultural and linguistic differences and that they meet the needs of clients regardless of their background);
- integrating MP principles completely, but visibly into the core of agency business; and
- maximising existing policies and practices which may already be consistent with MP and addressing gaps which might still exist.

5. AREAS WHERE MP CAN BE INTEGRATED INTO AGENCY BUSINESS

Some areas where MP principles can be included in agency business are as follows:
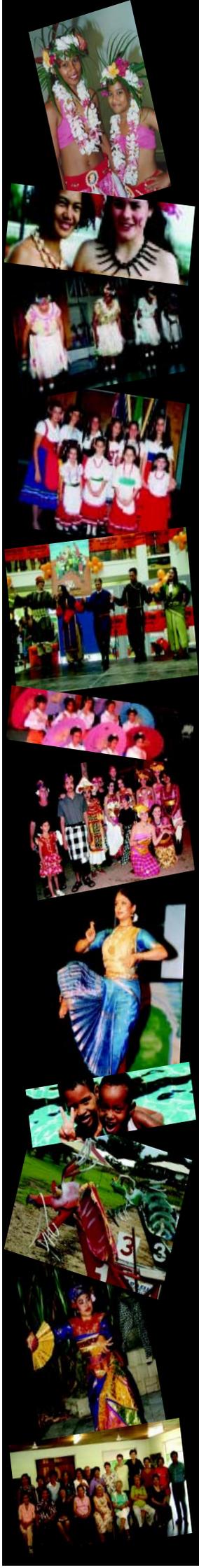
5.1 Visions, Mission, Goal, Role and Purpose Statements

Agencies can ensure that the statements about its direction, identity and culture send clear messages about its commitment to customer focused service delivery in a culturally diverse society.

Example:

This agency is responsive to the individual needs of clients, and provides equitable and accessible service delivery to all, regardless of background.

5.2 General Policy Statements

Agencies can integrate MP into general policy development. When the agency develops new policies or when it reviews and rewrites existing polices, it can use the opportunity to integrate MP principles and values into those processes.

5.3 Agency Specific Multicultural Policy Statements

Agencies may implement MP by developing agency specific multicultural policy statements that reflect the broad directions of MP and their particular organisational identity and style.

A typical multicultural policy statement would address the following:

- a statement which outlines the purpose of the policy (eg. to provide a framework for guiding the agency in service delivery strategies to meet the needs of a culturally diverse society);
- principles which guide the agency in implementing multicultural approaches (eg. access, equity, communication, responsiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability);
- key strategies to be adopted under the policy.

5.4 Outcome statements

Agencies can integrate relevant MP principles into the outcomes and supporting outcomes statements in the context of Working for Outcomes.

MP related outcomes can be drawn from the core principles identified in the policy.

Examples:

Clients enjoy equitable access to the service of this agency, and their needs are met by the services of this agency, regardless of their background.
All members of the community enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities in their relationships with this agency.

5.5 Performance Measures

Agencies can determine performance measures relevant to MP related outcomes and strategies and articulate them in strategic and operational plans.

There are no mandatory measures of performance required under the MP. Performance measures are totally dependent on the strategies and approaches adopted by each agency .

However, agencies can review their existing generic performance measurement to integrate the strategies and approaches adopted under MP. Alternatively they can develop two or three specific performance measures to provide specific data on the key strategies adopted under MP

Examples:

Quantity

- the percentage of clients from specific groups in the community profile who access the services;
- the number of times that interpreter services have been used;
- the number of times that radio programs have been used for service publicity and promotional campaigns;
- the number and percentage of staff who have undertaken cross cultural training.

Quality
- the level of awareness of services, program, resources amongst members of specific groups in the ethnic community;
- the level of awareness amongst staff of MP and the agency's plans to implement MP strategies.

6. REPORTING
Agencies are required to report strategies and performance in implementing MP in their portfolio. The various reports from agencies are consolidated into an annual report issued by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. There is no specific format requirements for this reporting. Minimum reporting should identify strategies developed and performance achieved in their implementation. The performance measures which agencies develop themselves provide a major source of information of this level of reporting.

7. SOME KEY MP RELATED STRATEGIES
6.1 Gathering the information needed for planning
Agencies should try to ensure that consultation and information gathering mechanisms respond to ethnic diversity. The first step in this process is learning who the ethnic client groups are and considering whether this group os significantly different to others and therefore requires a different approach from the agency. It may also be worth asking in what ways and at what levels do different ethnic groups participate in a particular program.

Communities are the best source of information about issues and needs in the community. Methods for tapping into that source of information are many and varied and can include:
- undertaking surveys, focus groups, and other specifically designed information gathering exercises;
- maintaining network relationships with ethnic community organisations, groups, workers and individuals to create a continuous cycle of information sharing;
- promoting multicultural representation on advisory bodies and in decision making processes.

7.2 Communication with Clients
Many access issues can be addressed by ensuring good communication exists between the agency and its client groups.
Some useful communication strategies may include:
- developing multi-pronged communication strategies (eg young people in one community may use different channels of communication to young people in another);
- providing professional interpreters when clients speak little or no English;
- ensuring that images used in agency publications represent the diverse client base and the diverse workforce of the agency;
- creating a continuous cycle of communication between the agency and the client groups through appropriate networks and joint planning processes.

7.3 Organisational Culture Development
The establishment of an organisational environment based on multicultural values and principles will ensure that cultural diversity is taken into account as an integral component of daily business.
Strategies can include:
- articulating the agency's commitment to the principles of MP through all levels of leadership in the organisation;
- publicising agency initiatives under MP widely within the organisation;
- actively promoting an awareness, appreciation and sensitivity to cultural diversity within the agency;
- ensuring that customer service staff receive training in implementing the agencies initiatives under MP;
- encouraging staff to attend cross cultural training programs.

7.4 Community Funding

Agencies that provide grants to the community have a special opportunity to achieve MP outcomes.
Strategies can include:

- ensuring that funding guidelines, selection criteria and funding agreements all incorporate the principles of MP;
- promoting information on grants programs to all groups in the community;
- ensuring that application procedures are easy to understand and follow;
- providing training and useful information to community organisations, including ethnic community organisations, about the grants application process;
- ensuring that historical precedent does not outweigh merit in the selection of successful applicants;
- providing helpful feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

7.5 Targeted Services

The general approach recommended by MP is the development of services which are flexible and responsive to the needs of all clients. Sometimes this may require the development of specific services targeting specific groups.
Groups whose needs may require the development of specific strategies include:

- Refugees;
- Women from diverse backgrounds.

7.6 Effective use of workforce diversity

Making effective use of diversity in the workplace means taking advantage of the assets which a culturally diverse workforce may offer. These include language skills, cultural knowledge, networks and fresh approaches to problem solving linked to different perspectives and experiences.

Specifically it can be used to advantage to inform policy and program design, to provide language services in house and for direct service delivery where it may be appropriate for the service to be given by someone form the same cultural background as the client.

Actions relevant to making more effective use of diversity in the workforce include:

- Identifying and putting in place procedures to address requirements for specific workplace provisions where appropriate (eg. prayer rooms; cultural leave);
- Integrating cross cultural issues into relevant orientation, team training and professional development programs.