

SUBMISSION TO  
Department of Premier and Cabinet, Community  
Development Division  
*Many Voices: Discussion Paper on the Tasmanian  
Multicultural Policy*

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## Anglicare Tasmania

Anglicare Tasmania is the largest community service organisation in Tasmania, with offices in Hobart, Glenorchy, Launceston, St. Helens, Devonport and Burnie, and a range of outreach programs in rural areas. Anglicare provides a range of services including support for housing, mental health, disability, substance abuse, gambling, financial counselling, families and children, young people, and relationships. While Anglicare does not receive any specific funding to support Tasmania's migrant, former-refugee and asylum-seeker communities, many individuals and families from these backgrounds access Anglicare's services.

Alongside service provision, Anglicare's Social Action Research Centre (SARC) conducts research, policy and advocacy work with a focus on the needs of Tasmanians on low incomes. In recent years SARC published *'Dropped from the moon: the settlement experiences of refugee communities in Tasmania'* (Flanagan 2007), convened the Tasmanians for Refugees network, organised annual SIEV X memorials, and participated in Refugee Week and Harmony Day activities.

This submission is informed this recent work of SARC.

## Executive Summary

Anglicare Tasmania welcomes this opportunity to provide a submission to the Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC), Community Development Division (CDD), on its proposed new Multicultural Policy for the state.

This submission draws on the research of Anglicare's SARC in the area of cultural diversity in Tasmania, particularly the report 'Dropped from the Moon: the settlement experiences of refugee communities in Tasmania' (Flanagan 2007) and Anglicare's experience of supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

Anglicare Tasmania applauds the state government for its commitment to multiculturalism in Tasmania and its desire to make Tasmania a welcoming place for people from all different cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. We agree that the new policy should remain consistent with the principles of the 2001 policy, as they are still valid. The new policy should also build on the action plans of the 2001 policy and contain similar or strengthened implementation and reporting requirements. The 'Many Voices' discussion paper does not contain any information on how the new policy is to be implemented or the progress of the 2001 actions.

We note the importance of Multicultural Tasmania and the Tasmanian Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs (TACMA) to the 2001 policy, and note that neither of these bodies exist anymore. We assume the new policy will reflect this and urge the government to again develop an advisory body of multicultural consumers to report on the policy and provide the community's perspective on its implementation, consistent with the state government Consumer Engagement Policy.

Overall, the themes of our response are:

- The updated policy needs to build on the actions of the 2001 policy, reflecting the gaps that still exist, changed environment and new ideas.
- The updated policy needs to define how Tasmanian government agencies are to implement and report against the policy and who is responsible to ensure this happens.
- The updated policy needs to reflect the state government's commitment to consumer engagement and have a representative community body attached to it to reflect their experiences as consumers.

- Each Tasmanian government department should have a designated multicultural officer who can advocate for culturally diverse clients accessing its services.
- Each Tasmanian government department should be funded and trained to use the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS). We note that the 2001 policy had an action to develop a state government Language Services Policy, but we were unable to find this document.
- All Tasmanian government employees should be required to do cultural diversity training upon commencing employment.
- Education of the broader community is integral to successful acceptance of cultural diversity in Tasmania and the best way to do this is starting in Tasmanian schools by ensuring the state government support diversity programs and celebrations of cultural diversity such as Harmony Day and Refugee Week in Tasmanian schools.
- The state government needs to lead by example by hosting and funding celebrations of diversity, employing people of diverse backgrounds, and adopting accessible policies.
- The state government needs to support local governments to become accessible for culturally diverse residents and support them in celebrations of diversity. We note CDD can include cultural diversity strategies in partnership agreements between the state government and local government, but that this has only occurred in three local government areas to date. We urge this practice to continue and to be upgraded.
- We also commend the 'Better Access to Government Services for Humanitarian Entrants Report' by the Tasmanian government and urge that the updated Multicultural Policy reflect the recommendations in this report and that the two documents work alongside each other.
- The Tasmanian government needs to play a role in educating the broader business and industry communities about diversity in the state, accessibility policies and cultural diversity. CDD should develop education plans for each different business and industry group and target training during the year. This could be done in conjunction with the Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, which already conducts training on discrimination more broadly.

## Introduction

The 'Many Voices' discussion paper highlights the cultural diversity in Tasmania and that although Tasmania does not have single large migrant communities, it has many small communities from all over the world who have settled in Tasmania for a range of reasons. We support the continuance of the existing four 2001 Multicultural Policy principles and overall discussion in the 'Many Voices' paper, but we note that the discussion paper does not include any information on the progress of the action plans in the 2001 policy, any mechanisms for implementation, reporting or proposed new actions, and that these are needed to assess what should be included in the updated policy. We could also not find any reports on the 2001 policy. We believe the updated policy needs to include action plans with responsibilities and reporting requirements so that state government agencies are seen to be taking multiculturalism seriously by the broader community.

### **Question 1: How can multiculturalism and the benefits of diversity be promoted to communities, industries and businesses?**

In our research (Flanagan 2007) we found that the majority of former refugees arrive in Tasmania with a desire to make Tasmania home and to contribute to their new home. Key to the success of this ideal is acceptance from the local community, access to affordable housing and employment opportunities.

This consultation question is very broad. There are many different communities, industries and businesses that need specific targeting and different strategies to promote multiculturalism and cultural diversity. Anglicare's research identified sectors of the community that needed specific strategies and support from the state government to ensure cultural diversity is promoted. These are the sectors that most new communities are reliant upon on arrival: the rental market, the public health department, the public education system, and systems of local and state government. Anglicare therefore recommends that the CDD begin with strategies for each of these and then move on to other sectors (Flanagan 2007; pp. 26-28). The Tasmanian government should also ensure that any strategies should include funding to access the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) and cultural diversity training for all public servants where their role makes this appropriate. We support the development of a Languages Service Policy that could be implemented across all state government agencies.

We commend the work of volunteers already happening under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Service, Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and the Tasmanian Asylum Seeker Support Group. Our research shows that these new communities appreciate the welcome of these volunteers and that they make a significant impact on settlement experiences (Flanagan 2007, p. 28). Some Tasmanian local governments are also making a positive contribution to promoting multiculturalism and the benefits of diversity. These include Hobart, Clarence, Launceston, Kingsborough and Glenorchy, who all have multicultural advisory groups and publicly celebrate events such as Harmony Day, Refugee Week, and Australia Day citizenship ceremonies. These public celebrations allow the broader community to participate and celebrate cultural diversity and we encourage the Tasmanian government to continue to support these local government initiatives as a local presence of multiculturalism and celebration of cultural diversity.

The benefits of cultural diversity also need to be backed up by legislation with consequences for behaviour that undermines community cohesion. Presently racism is covered by the *Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Act 1999* which allows for ‘the investigation and conciliation of, and inquiry into, complaints of discrimination and prohibited conduct’ but not for criminal charges or punishment (OADC n.d.). The focus on conciliation can lead to education of the offender, but in certain instances greater consequences may be needed. Anglicare commends the work of Tasmania Police with their identified ‘Multicultural Liaison Officers’ educating new communities about law enforcement in Tasmania, and support the continuing funding of this role from the Tasmanian Government.

Business and industry play a key role in accepting cultural diversity in the Tasmanian community by employing people of diverse backgrounds. In Anglicare’s research former-refugee communities expressed a great desire to work and give back to their new home, but unfortunately also reported significant barriers to gaining employment and the recurrent experience of discriminatory and racist practices and comments in work environments (Flanagan 2007, p. 52). The Tasmanian Government could play a far greater role here in supporting Tasmanian businesses to recognise the value of overseas qualifications. They could also take action in supporting new arrivals to update or up-skill their overseas qualifications. There is also an important role to play in educating Tasmanian businesses about cultural diversity and the value of a diverse workforce.

### **Question 2.1: How can culturally diverse groups be better informed about the services available in their local communities?**

New arrivals to Tasmania have to deal with Tasmanian government services, so these services need to be able to support migrants, asylum seekers, and former refugees. Each government department

should have a procedure to support culturally diverse clients and a designated multicultural officer, all relevant staff should be trained to use TIS, and all staff receive training in cultural diversity. CDD needs to then promote these services to agencies directly dealing with new arrivals such as the University of Tasmania, Migrant Resource Centres, the Red Cross, Centacare, and community groups, so they can support new arrivals in receiving the best service possible.

We are aware that some departments already have this system in place, for example DHHS. In best practice examples clients receive the service they need, are advocated for within the department, and other service providers know who to contact.

Similarly the CDD should ensure that all local governments have appropriate procedures in place or a designated person to support culturally diverse citizens. This could be done through the partnership agreements between the state government and local governments that already exist.

### **Question 2.2: How can Government services identify and respond to the changing needs of people with diverse cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds?**

As identified in 'Many Voices', Tasmania is already made up of people from over 100 countries, over 129 different languages are spoken and 24 religious faiths are represented (p.4). A robust multicultural policy shouldn't need to change as different groups arrive, as thorough strategies should be in place that ensures acceptance and support for people no matter what country, language or religion they represent. Rather the action plans for implementing the principles need to be fulfilled and built upon to reflect improving services and changing environments. Cultural diversity and TIS training are also ways to ensure this happens.

We note that when the 2001 policy was developed when 'Multicultural Tasmania' existed within the DPAC, along with a multicultural advisory group, and these no longer exist. We understand the recent need to limit government spending that led to these cuts, but urge the Tasmanian government to ensure the updated policy sets out targets and responsibility to ensure acceptance of cultural diversity is taken seriously by all government departments. A community advisory group attached to the policy and reporting to CDD also fits with the government's Community Engagement Strategy and would ensure a balanced view.



### **Question 3.1: How can participation in learning and work be improved for Tasmanians from cultural, religious and linguistically diverse backgrounds?**

The CDD needs to identify the barriers facing culturally diverse Tasmanians and then work on strategies for addressing them. We know from our research that barriers include poor access to transport, lack of English, barriers to getting employment, prior qualifications and training not being recognised, lack of understanding of Tasmanian workplace culture, lack of local networks, childcare, discrimination, and settlement issues (Flanagan 2007). For each of these areas the state government could take responsibility and develop particular strategies around them to improve the participation of new arrivals. These strategies would then need to be included in the Multicultural Policy with requirements for reporting against

Regarding education outcomes, designated staff members to support migrants and new arrivals in each education institution in Tasmania can also ensure participation in education and advocate for students from culturally diverse backgrounds. English as a Second Language teachers in the public education system, the international students' office at the University of Tasmania and AMEP teachers are of great value to new arrivals. Students who are struggling with pressures outside school or language barriers are not going to perform well educationally. Advocates for these students within the education system can play a key role in ensuring these students do not get left behind. The Tasmanian Government provides all Indigenous students with personalised learning plans and a similar model could be applied here.

### **Question 3.2: How can all people feel part of and contribute to their local community, including those who are newly arrived?**

From our research, we know new arrivals generally arrive with a desire to participate and contribute to Tasmania. Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) research indicates that new arrivals have a great desire to become Australian citizens (cited in Flanagan, pp. 43-44). As identified above, feeling part of the community begins with moving through the necessary government departments easily and then settling into employment or education. The Tasmanian government needs to address the barriers to both employment and education identified above.

This work needs to be complemented by more work with the Tasmanian community to promote acceptance of new arrivals.

### **Question 3.3: How can local communities make migrants feel welcomed?**

This submission has covered the strategies by which local and state government agencies can promote a welcome to migrants. The accessibility of accommodation, education and health is critical to positive settlement experiences.

In addition, public celebrations and events for Harmony Day, Refugee Week, Citizenship Ceremonies and other cultural festivals allow new community members to feel welcome and celebrate with their new Tasmanian community.

Volunteers attached to formal settlement services should continue to be encouraged and their role celebrated. They play an integral role in making migrants feel welcome. In addition to these formal volunteers, CDD should support existing community organisations such as Tasmanian Community Houses and Playgroups to welcome new arrivals settling in the suburbs around them. CDD could provide, or support other organisations to provide, cultural diversity training and basic information about cultural diversity in Tasmania to these local organisations.

Existing migrant communities also play a role in making new members feel welcome. Anglicare's research identified the large secondary movement of former refugees from Tasmania to mainland cities with larger communities (Flanagan 2007, p. 7). DIAC tries to settle members of former-refugee communities together to create viable communities. Community organisations such as the Migrant Resource Centres, Centacare and the Red Cross then assist these communities with capacity building and governance to form community organisations that can support their members. CDD should support community organisations in this role and could develop programs with local service clubs that already have good systems in place such as Rotary, Lions and CWA to mentor and support these new community organisations.

### **Question 4.1: How can respect for all Tasmanians be improved?**

Respect for all Tasmanians can be improved through education and appropriate legislation or policies. Tasmanian schools should be supported to run multicultural and diversity programs and activities around particular days. These policies and legislation can broadly apply to all forms of discrimination beyond racial.

#### **Question 4.2: How can the shared experience, identities and values of all Tasmanians be strengthened?**

The shared experiences and humanity of migrants in Tasmania can be strengthened through the empowerment and appreciation of story-telling. Different waves of migrants to Tasmania have different stories, but similarities connect and unite them. The Multicultural Council of Tasmania (MCoT), Migrant Resource Centres, other community organisations and the CDD all have the potential to bring these different migrants together and allow them to share their stories with each other and then with the broader community.

#### **Question 5.1: Do you support these principles?**

- Addressing diversity is everyone's responsibility;
- Ensure that equality of outcome is as important as equality of access; and
- To recognise the right of all Tasmanians to live in a non-violent, free and democratic state

Anglicare supports the principles if there are firm policies to back them up. Such a framework would require an access and equity policy with government agencies required to report against it. The third principle is admirable but some attention would need to be given to the difficulties in addressing racially inspired harassment .

#### **Question 6.1: How can peak bodies and other community sector organisations, which represent the interests of all Tasmanians including those from diverse cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds, engage with government and advocate on behalf of individuals and communities?**

Tasmania has numerous migrant and ethnic organisations that support and consult with their communities, organise public events and provide input into policy development. Local government bodies and the government multicultural advisory body are avenues for representatives of these groups to advocate to government. If needed, designated cultural diversity officers within government departments could provide advocacy for individuals in need. The Tasmanian government could also play a role in supporting MCoT. The Tasmanian government needs to be willing to listen to these organisations.

## Conclusion

Anglicare would like to see a Tasmania that welcomes and celebrates diversity and the successful settlement of all types of migrants who can then contribute to their new community. The Multicultural Policy is an important framework for progressing this, but it needs solid implementation and reporting requirements to make government agencies take it on board. The Multicultural Policy also needs to build on the 2001 policy and receive ongoing advice and reports from multicultural communities in Tasmania. Included in this should be agreements with local governments in Tasmania about their responsibilities to promote multiculturalism and a Tasmanian Government Languages Services Policy. This is work of broader importance that reaches beyond the migrant communities. Welcoming people of different backgrounds into the Tasmanian community will go a long way to developing a tolerant, robust and supportive community that will only have positive effects for all other areas of life in Tasmania.

## References

Flanagan, J 2007, 'Dropped from the moon: the settlement experiences of refugee communities in Tasmania', Anglicare Tasmania, Hobart.

Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, *Information on the Act*, viewed 26 June 2013, <[http://www.antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au/information\\_on\\_the\\_act](http://www.antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au/information_on_the_act)