

DoCS

Multicultural Strategic Commitment 2008-2013



NSW Department of
Community Services

Building Our Cultural Capability

The NSW Government is committed to improving the way the Department of Community Services (DoCS) ensures the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all children and young people in NSW. This includes those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and their families and communities.



DoCS Multicultural Strategic Commitment 2008-2013 will improve DoCS capacity to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services. The importance of this cannot be underestimated when we consider that NSW has the most diverse population in Australia. People from 140 birthplaces have made NSW their home - 24 per cent were born overseas and at least 40 per cent have one or both parents born overseas. Around 26 per cent of the population speaks a language other than English at home, and these people speak more than 200 languages.

This diversity is one of the great strengths of our state. Migrants and refugees bring prosperity, vitality and optimism, and produce significant benefits for NSW economically, culturally and socially. Multicultural programs are therefore critical to DoCS ability to deliver effective services to CALD clients.

The Commitment is designed to assist DoCS in doing this. It is based on the NSW Government's Principles of Multiculturalism (see page 5), which are enshrined in state law. It includes actions related to the Department's responsibilities under the State Plan: *A new direction for NSW*. Under the State Plan, DoCS is the lead organisation for supporting the increased proportion of children with skills for life and learning at school entry, and reducing rates of child abuse and neglect. The Commitment provides a solid basis to ensure that these priority areas deliver the best results for migrant and refugee children, young people, families and their communities.

I commend to you and formally launch *DoCS Multicultural Strategic Commitment*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Linda Burney'.

Linda Burney MP
Minister for Community Services

DoCS *Multicultural Strategic Commitment 2008-2013* outlines the Department's commitment to providing appropriate and effective services to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients and communities.

The Commitment provides a blueprint for the continued development of DoCS cultural capabilities. It does this by:

- setting the direction for multicultural service provision
- supporting good practice in services to CALD clients and communities
- ensuring multicultural issues are given appropriate consideration in all policy and operational areas
- establishing five-year objectives for the Department to support and provide services for CALD clients and their communities
- establishing a framework for planning and reporting on service provision for these clients
- integrating with corporate planning and reporting processes.

The Commitment is based on extensive consultation and incorporates DoCS Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) Plan.

This commitment will be reflected in the Department's corporate plan and in annual business plans, and reports for each division, directorate and business unit. Although DoCS Multicultural Services Unit will coordinate implementation, ultimately this is everyone's job.

Whether developing policy, planning new projects or delivering services to clients, everyone has a role in improving DoCS cultural capability. I commend this commitment to you and look forward to seeing its intent and strategies reflected in action and results.



Jennifer Mason

Jennifer Mason
Director-General
NSW Department of Community Services

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DoCS is strongly committed to providing fair and equitable services to clients and communities from CALD backgrounds. This is in line with legislative principles.

According to the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*:

- (a) In all actions and decisions made under this Act (whether by legal or administrative process) concerning a particular child or young person, the safety, welfare and well-being of the child or young person must be the paramount consideration. In particular, the safety, welfare and well-being of a child or young person who has been removed from his or her parents are paramount over the rights of the parents.
- (b) Wherever a child or young person is able to form his or her own views on a matter concerning his or her safety, welfare and well-being, he or she must be given an opportunity to express those views freely and those views are to be given due weight in accordance with the developmental capacity of the child or young person and the circumstances.
- (c) In all actions and decisions made under this Act (whether by legal or administrative process) that significantly affect a child or young person, account must be taken of the culture, disability, language, religion and sexuality of the child or young person and, if relevant, those with parental responsibility for the child or young person.
- (d) In deciding what action it is necessary to take (whether by legal or administrative process) in order to protect a child or young person from harm, the course to be followed must be the least intrusive intervention in the life of the child or young person and his or her family that is consistent with the paramount concern to protect the child or young person from harm and promote the child's or young person's development.
- (e) If a child or young person is temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or cannot be allowed to remain in that environment in his or her own best interests, the child or young person is entitled to special protection and assistance from the State, and his or her name, identity, language, cultural and religious ties should, as far as possible, be preserved.
- (f) If a child or young person is placed in out-of-home care, arrangements should be made, in a timely manner, to ensure the provision of a safe, nurturing, stable and secure environment, recognising the child or young person's circumstances and that, the younger the age of the child, the greater the need for early decisions to be made in relation to a permanent placement.
- (g) If a child or young person is placed in out-of-home care, the child or young person is entitled to a safe, nurturing, stable and secure environment. Unless it is contrary to his or her best interests, and taking into account the wishes of the child or young person, this will include the retention by the child or young person of relationships with people significant to the child or young person, including birth or adoptive parents, siblings, extended family, peers, family friends and community.

According to the NSW Principles of Multiculturalism, which are enshrined in the *Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000*:

- All individuals in NSW should have the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to, and participate in, all aspects of public life in which they may legally participate.
- All individuals and institutions should respect and make provision for the culture, language and religion of others within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the common language.
- All individuals should have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of and participate in relevant activities and programs provided or administered by the Government of NSW.
- All institutions of NSW should recognise the linguistic and cultural assets in the population of NSW as a valuable resource and promote this resource to maximise the development of the State.

The following objectives provide the foundation for enhancing DoCS business practices and processes with a view to achieving a culturally capable organisation.

They meet best practice standards for agency performance under the NSW Government's Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS).

1 CORPORATE PLANNING, REPORTING AND EVALUATION

- The Commitment will be integrated into corporate planning and reporting processes.
- Service planning, reporting and evaluation will be supported by accurate data on cultural identity and language spoken.

2 DIRECT SERVICE DELIVERY

- Services will be accessible and delivered equitably to CALD clients.
- DoCS will consult with stakeholders in developing and delivering services to CALD clients and communities.
- DoCS will work with state/Commonwealth agencies to support whole-of-government service delivery to CALD clients.

3 WORKFORCE PLANNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- DoCS will increase the cultural capability of its workforce to deal with cultural diversity issues through recruitment, learning and professional development initiatives.

4 COMMUNICATION

- Interpreters and other language services will be used to communicate with clients with little or no English language skills.
- DoCS will improve CALD communities' understanding of its work through specific community education strategies.

5 FUNDED SERVICES

- DoCS-funded services will be accessible and delivered equitably to CALD clients.

The objectives are supported by specific strategies which will be incorporated into DoCS planning and reporting, ensuring they translate into tangible actions and results.

1 CORPORATE PLANNING, REPORTING AND EVALUATION

- **The Commitment will be integrated into corporate planning and reporting processes.**
- **Service planning, reporting and evaluation will be supported by accurate data on cultural identity and language spoken.**

Strategies

- 1.1 Integrate The Commitment into the Department’s five-year corporate plan and report against that plan.
- 1.2 Reflect The Commitment in annual business plans and all business unit reports.
- 1.3 Include responsibilities for implementing The Commitment in executive management performance agreements.
- 1.4 Resource the Department’s Multicultural Services Unit to coordinate the implementation of strategies under The Commitment.
- 1.5 Collect accurate client data on cultural identity and language spoken, and analyse data to inform service planning and evaluation.
- 1.6 Incorporate client outcomes and service provision for CALD clients in program evaluations and monitoring.
- 1.7 Undertake research on service provision and outcomes for CALD clients within the framework of DoCS research agenda.

2 DIRECT SERVICE DELIVERY

- **Services will be accessible and delivered equitably to CALD clients.**
- **DoCS will consult with stakeholders in developing and delivering services to CALD clients and communities.**
- **DoCS will work with state/Commonwealth agencies to support whole-of-government service delivery to CALD clients.**

Strategies

- 2.1 Implement standards for effective casework with CALD children and families as part of quality assurance processes.
- 2.2 Assess the quality of casework practice with CALD clients as part of quality assurance.
- 2.3 Produce and use resources based on available evidence to support good casework practice with CALD clients in child protection, out-of-home care (OOHC) and early intervention.
- 2.4 Integrate CALD issues into all service delivery policies, guidelines, manuals and procedures.
- 2.5 Provide and support good casework practice with CALD clients, by using the linguistic and cross-cultural skills of multicultural caseworkers in DoCS Multicultural Caseworker Program.
- 2.6 Recruit, train, assess, support and retain culturally diverse foster carers.
- 2.7 Include cultural maintenance strategies in care plans for CALD children in care.
- 2.8 Place CALD children who enter care with carers familiar with their language and culture, where this will support cultural maintenance strategies in care plans.
- 2.9 Train, assess and support all foster carers so they are capable of providing culturally appropriate care for children from CALD backgrounds.
- 2.10 Integrate information supporting good practice with CALD clients in all foster carer resource materials.
- 2.11 Respond to the needs of new and emerging communities through specifically targeted pilots and programs.

3 WORKFORCE PLANNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **DoCS will increase the capability of its workforce to deal with cultural diversity issues through recruitment, learning, and professional development initiatives.**

Strategies

- 3.1 Recruit a workforce that reflects the changing cultural and language demographics of the client population.
- 3.2 Incorporate equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination principles in all workforce planning policies and practice, and related training.
- 3.3 Include skills required to provide services for CALD clients in position descriptions for all staff and managers.
- 3.4 Put processes in place to assess cultural capabilities when recruiting staff and managers.
- 3.5 Develop the skills and knowledge of all staff and managers to provide services to CALD clients and communities through training and professional development.
- 3.6 Integrate content on working effectively with CALD clients and working in a culturally diverse workplace in learning and development programs.
- 3.7 Provide induction and ongoing training to all casework staff and managers on effective casework practice with migrant and refugee families.
- 3.8 Provide training to managers on managing diversity in the workplace.
- 3.9 Provide training to head office staff on strategies for integrating CALD considerations into service, policy and procedural development.
- 3.10 Develop increased expertise, practice resources, and deliver practice forums on key CALD service delivery issues.
- 3.11 Develop the skills and knowledge of staff and managers in providing services to CALD clients and communities through a multicultural staff conference every two years.

4 COMMUNICATION

- **Interpreters and other language services will be used to communicate with clients with little or no English language skills.**
- **DoCS will improve CALD communities' understanding of its work through specific community education strategies.**

Strategies

- 4.1 Provide procedures on effective use of interpreters, the Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS) and translations, to inform good practice by staff and managers.
- 4.2 Provide ongoing training to caseworkers, casework managers and other relevant DoCS staff on how to use interpreters and other language services effectively.
- 4.3 Collect accurate data on use of interpreter services by each language and cost centre for all business units, to inform planning and evaluation of interpreter services.
- 4.4 Use CLAS recipients' language skills to support basic communication with clients who cannot communicate effectively in English.
- 4.5 Review languages covered by CLAS based on data about clients and use of interpreters.
- 4.6 Translate key community information resources based on data about high-need communities and make these accessible to clients.
- 4.7 Improve DoCS capacity to provide translated letters and notices to child protection clients who cannot read English.
- 4.8 Hold community information sessions for migrant and refugee groups about child protection and the role of DoCS.
- 4.9 Ensure CALD communities are taken into account in DoCS community information and education strategies.
- 4.10 Consult with stakeholders through DoCS Ethnic Affairs Advisory Group, regional multicultural advisory committees and the Multicultural Staff Reference Group to inform service planning and provision.
- 4.11 Consult with appropriate NSW agencies to inform planning and service provision for CALD clients and communities.
- 4.12 Consult with Commonwealth agencies to inform Commonwealth/state planning and service provision for CALD clients and communities.

5 FUNDED SERVICES

- **DoCS-funded services will be accessible and delivered equitably to CALD clients.**

Strategies

- 5.1 Integrate requirements for planning and service provision for CALD clients in all program guidelines; criteria for assessing funding applications, service specifications and reporting requirements in DoCS-funded programs.
- 5.2 Plan, implement and report on strategies to deliver services to CALD clients by funded services.
- 5.3 Develop systems to collect client data on cultural identity and language spoken from funded services, to inform program planning and evaluation.
- 5.4 Resource, coordinate and monitor a free interpreter service for DoCS-funded services.
- 5.5 Resource staff training and develop practice resources to support service delivery to CALD clients by funded services.
- 5.6 Include analysis of culturally diverse community service needs and specific strategies to meet those needs, in evaluation, planning and design of funded services.
- 5.7 Fund targeted services for CALD clients and communities with identified needs.

IMPLEMENTATION, REPORTING AND EVALUATION

DoCS Multicultural Strategic Commitment 2008 - 2013 is effective from 1 July 2008. Staff will be briefed on their specific responsibilities.

Importantly, The Commitment will be reflected in the Department's next five-year Corporate Plan and in annual business plans and reports for all DoCS divisions and directorates. It has been developed around the Department's core work functions. Reporting against the The Commitment's objectives and strategies will be required by the end of each financial year to support good coordination and implementation across the Department.

It will be reviewed periodically to help strengthen its effectiveness in assisting DoCS work with CALD clients and communities.

For inquiries and feedback about the development, implementation and evaluation of The Commitment contact the Manager, Multicultural Services Unit.

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