

### Changes to Ethnic Affairs Legislation

Recognising that New South Wales is one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world, the New South Wales Government has reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring that the needs of the community are reflected in all aspects of government activity. A review of ethnic affairs in New South Wales resulted in the publication of the 'Building on Our Cultural Diversity: Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000'. This Plan and the associated legislation, the Ethnic Affairs Commission Amendment Act 1996, endorse actions which recognise and value cultural diversity and enshrine the principles of cultural diversity in legislation. (Section 3 of the Act is set out below.)

As a public sector agency the University is covered by this legislation as is required to:

- observe the principles of cultural diversity as set out in Section 3 of the Ethnic Affairs Commission Act;
- prepare an Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS), as specified in the Premier's Memorandum No97-7;
- include in our Annual Report a statement setting out the progress in implementing the agency's EAPS, as required by (1997) Regulations under the Annual Reports Acts; and
- include in our Annual Report a statement describing any agreement entered into with the Ethnic Affairs Commission, and progress with that agreement, as required by new (1997) Regulations under the Annual Reports Act.

Central to our responsibility is the requirement to ensure the following key objectives are integrated into core activities and that these are reflected in all corporate planning and management strategies:

- Social Justice — ensuring that resources are fairly distributed.
- Community Harmony — fostering a climate of mutual respect.
- Economic and Cultural Opportunities — recognising cultural diversity as a positive force.

#### Section 3. Principles of Cultural Diversity

(1) Parliament recognises and values the cultural diversity of the people of New South Wales. It does so by supporting and promoting the following principles of cultural diversity:

##### (a) Principle 1

All individuals in New South Wales should have the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to, and participate in, all aspects of public life.

##### (b) Principle 2

All individuals and public institutions should respect and accommodate the culture, language and religion of others within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the primary language.

##### (c) Principle 3

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 New South Wales.

**(d) Principle 4**

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

- (2) The principles of cultural diversity are the policy of the State.
- (3) Accordingly, each public authority must observe the principles of cultural diversity in conducting its affairs.
- (4) It is the duty of the chief executive officer of each public authority to implement the provisions of this section within the area of his or her administration.
- (5) The cultural diversity of the people of New South Wales reflects the whole population of New South Wales, which comprises people from a range of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. The expression cultural diversity is to be construed accordingly.

*(Amendment to the Ethnic Affairs Commission Act 1996, proclaimed in January 1997.)*

**UNE's Commitment to Cultural Diversity**

The University of New England aims to achieve an inclusive work and study environment which reflects the diversity of Australian society.

It is committed to EEO principles, values cultural diversity and recognises that all its employees have a contribution to make in ensuring an equitable and harmonious working environment. Equity principles underpin all UNE policies and procedures.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ingrid Moses, confirms this in our Strategic Plan 1997–2002 when she states that the University is committed to fostering a culture characterised by:

- trust, integrity, and fairness;
- valuing of staff and students;
- cooperation and collegiality;
- flexibility and responsiveness;
- open communication;
- creativity and innovation;
- achievement through diversity;
- accountability for decision and outcomes.

The University has developed its Cultural Diversity Priorities Statement in consultation with the Cultural Diversity Focus Group and the wider University community. You will note that we are using the name Cultural Diversity Priorities Statement rather than Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement. There has been some debate in the past as to whether the word 'ethnic' as used in the Australian Government context was appropriate for application to Indigenous peoples. We have therefore used the broader title to allow inclusion of strategies aimed at Indigenous staff and students.

**Cultural Diversity and the Armidale Area**

The 1996 Census recorded an Indigenous population of 352,970 or approximately 2 per cent of the Australian population. For the local government area of Armidale, the Indigenous population was 1026, approximately 4.8 per cent of the population. The area also has a large overseas born population and is one of 16 local government areas listed by the Ethnic Affairs Commission as having the largest proportions of overseas born in non-English speaking countries in the non-metropolitan area.

**Armidale:**

Summary indicators	1996	% of
	Census*	Population
Population	21,330	100%
Australian born	18,010	84.4%
Overseas born	2,525	11.8%
Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islanders	1,024	4.8%
Visitors from overseas	152	0.7%
Language other than English spoken at home	1,267	5.9%

\*Australian Bureau of Statistics

**University of New England:**

Summary indicators	As of 31 March	% of UNE
	1998	Population
UNE Academic Staff	485	37%
Identified as Ethnic Minority*	117	24%
First Language other than English*	80	17%
Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islanders*	1	0.3%

Summary indicators	As of 31 March	% of UNE
	1998	Population
UNE General Staff	810	63%
Identified as Ethnic Minority*	86	11%
First Language other than English*	55	7%
Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islanders*	14	1.7%

\*Where response rates are less than 100%, the representation of EEO groups other than women are estimated. The estimates are based on the assumption that non-respondents are the same as respondents. (Response rate for UNE staff at the reference date was 70%.)

*For more information, please contact the EEO Unit on ext 3591.*