Providing and Promoting Public Library Services to a Culturally Diverse New South Wales

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1. Introduction
The delivery of multicultural public library services in New South Wales (NSW) has been shaped by national, state and local government laws and policies. These provide the context for multicultural public library services in New South Wales, the focus of this paper.

2. Australia
Indigenous Australians have inhabited Australia for between 25,000 and 60,000 years. The remainder of Australia's population are settlers, or descendants of settlers, who have arrived during the last two centuries. The first European settlers to Australia arrived at what is now Sydney, NSW in January 1788.

Until the mid 20th century Australia had a predominantly European migrant population as the result of policies that restricted immigration for non-Europeans. This changed after World War II when there was a substantial growth in population due to immigration. Over the years further international, national, political and economic changes created an environment that moved Australia towards a more tolerant, inclusive multicultural society.

The current provision of multicultural services in Australia is in response to policies and legislation which includes the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. This Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against people because of their race, colour, descendent, nationality or ethnic origins. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission is responsible for the implementation of the Racial Discrimination Act as well as the following federal government laws:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Privacy Act 1988
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
In 1989 the Australian Federal Government launched the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, which incorporates three fundamental ideas:

- **cultural identity**: the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;
- **social justice**: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth; and
- **economic efficiency**: the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.4

3. **New South Wales (NSW)**

The State of New South Wales is one of the most culturally diverse communities in Australia. People from around 140 birthplaces have made the State their home and around 26% of the population speak a language other than English at home. This diversity is an asset. It also requires planning and innovation by the NSW government and other agencies, particularly when delivering programs and services.

The Community Relations Commission for a multicultural NSW was established in 2001. The Commission works to support and develop relationships between people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Previously called the Ethnic Affairs Commission, the intention behind dropping the term ‘ethnic affairs’ was to be more community oriented and strategic in identifying issues and producing solutions through partnership with Government and communities.5

All NSW government agencies are guided by the four Principles of Multiculturalism, which are enshrined in State law. The Principles confirm the right of individuals in NSW to:

1. fully contribute and participate in the life of the state
2. respect the culture, language and religion of others (within a legal and constitutional framework where English is the common language)
3. have access to government services
4. have the linguistic and cultural assets in NSW recognised and promoted6

The NSW Government’s *Community Relations Plan of Action 2012* transforms these principles into broad objectives. The objectives are: leadership to encourage and value a culturally diverse society; community harmony; access and equity within the framework of social justice obligations; and economic and cultural opportunities.7

Public sector agencies integrate these principles and objectives into their core business through their Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS). The EAPS shows how an agency will address the needs of a culturally diverse society, according to its charter.8
4. NSW Local Government
New South Wales local government authorities (councils) are required to develop access and equity initiatives targeting people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and include these initiatives in their management plans. They are also required to report in their annual reports on the implementation of access and equity activities, including those referring to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.9

All councils are required to prepare a social or community plan at least every five years. It is a public document containing demographic data, human needs assessment and recommended actions which councils consider for inclusion in the management and/or business unit plans. These plans must contain data and information about the needs of target groups, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.10

4.1 NSW public libraries
In New South Wales there are 99 public library services and 283 branches, making a total of 382 service points. The library services include a mixture of independent (stand alone) library services operated by a single local government authority (or council) and regional (cooperative) libraries where up to 12 local authorities have entered into an agreement to provide library services.

All 172 local authorities in NSW have adopted the Library Act 1939. The State Library of NSW is responsible for administering the Library Act 1939, which requires local authorities to provide core library services free of charge.11 However, local councils and their library services are autonomous and self governing. The majority of funding for public libraries is provided by local government. Total funds expended on public libraries by local government in 2001/02 was $193,178,710.12

5. State Library of New South Wales
The State Library of NSW is the oldest library in Australia with a history tracing back to the establishment of the Australian Subscription Library in 1862. In 1869 the NSW Government took over the responsibility for the Library and formed the Sydney Free Public Library, the first truly public library service for the people of New South Wales. The Library Council of New South Wales is the governing body of the State Library of New South Wales. The objects of the Library Council, as defined in the Library Act 1939, are:

- to promote, provide and maintain library and information services for the people of New South Wales through the State Library and through cooperation with local libraries and information agencies,
- to advise the Minister, local authorities and, when the minister so approves, other bodies, on matters of policy and administration relating to library services and information services that are or may be provided through local libraries and other libraries, and
- to advise the minister on the provision of assistance to local libraries or other libraries.13

The State Library manages the Public Libraries Grants and Subsidies Program on behalf of the NSW State Government. The program provides ongoing funding to local
government for public library services, which is paid as a subsidy according to the Library Act 1939 and the 1990 Funding Formula. This Formula takes into account population, isolation and demographic composition, among other factors, in determining the subsidy to be paid to the councils. The total state funding for the Public Libraries Grants and Subsidies Program in 2002/03 was $20.919 million.

Another component of the Public Libraries Grants and Subsidies Program is the annual Library Development Grants program. Councils are eligible to apply for up to a maximum of $200,000 for specific projects that will benefit the public library. Each year approximately 100 submissions are received requesting about $7 million in grants. In 2002/03 the funding allocated under this competitive program was $3,273,288.15

In addition to administering the Public Libraries Grants and Subsidies Program, the State Library provides consultancy and policy advice to local authorities and oversees compliance with the Library Act. The Library also provides advice to the NSW State Government on all aspects of public library provision.

5.1 State Library services to NSW public libraries
The public library network is the key distribution channel for State Library services and products. The Library Council promotes, provides and maintains access to these services and products in partnership with the network of public libraries. State Library services to public libraries include reference information, inter library loans, access to specialist legal, health, drug and education resources, touring exhibitions and NSW.net. The Library also provides information and advice to local authorities and public libraries on all aspects of library service delivery and management.16

NSW.net, an initiative of the State Library established in the late 1990s, provides councils, libraries and their communities with affordable, high speed and efficient access to the Internet. NSW.net, funded as part of the Public Libraries Grants and Subsidies Program, also provides free access to quality online databases and has provided over 700 public access Internet terminals to NSW public libraries to ensure that people across the State have free Internet access.17

5.2 State Library multicultural services for NSW public libraries
The State Library of NSW is committed to the provision of quality, integrated multicultural library services that are responsive to changing migration patterns and the changing information needs of a culturally diverse community. The Library provides access to its own multicultural services and collections and also provides leadership and support to all NSW public libraries offering multicultural library services. There is a Multicultural Consultant who has a specific responsibility to promote multicultural library services in NSW public libraries and to develop policies on multicultural issues for the State Library of New South Wales.

As required by government policy, the Library has an Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) which includes strategies to deliver integrated services to multicultural NSW. An annual report on the achievements is prepared for the Community Relations Commission, and highlights of multicultural library services are reported in the annual report of the Library Council of NSW.18
5.2.1 Multicultural library materials
In support of public libraries, the State Library collects and catalogues library materials in community languages for loan to public library clients. The Library works with public library staff and community representatives to ensure that the resources acquired are appropriate for culturally and linguistically diverse communities in both metropolitan and rural and regional areas. The State Library developed this back-up collection as most rural and regional, and some metropolitan, libraries cannot sustain community language collections as the cost is prohibitive due to a small multicultural population. The Library also maintains an English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) collection for loan to public libraries. The multicultural lending collections in 41 languages and the ESL collection, total 69,441 items. These collections are based on community profiles and demand.

Ensuring that library materials are relevant and accessible to clients from multicultural communities is a key challenge. Recently the State Library has focussed on the re-evaluation of the community language collection. As well as reviewing and updating current collections, new areas of need were identified on the basis of community profiles and demand. For example this has led to the establishment of a Gujurati collection. The Library is also proactively preparing for the projected increase of older people within the state, as it is estimated that 17% of the NSW population will be over the age of 65 years in 2016. To serve an increasingly aged population there will be an increasing emphasis on purchasing audio and large print books in community languages.

All multicultural and ESL collection items are lent free of charge through public libraries as part of a range of services that the State Library provides to support the network and to enhance the library services available to the people of New South Wales. The LOTE (language(s) other than English) and ESL materials are accessible via the Library’s web catalogue which assists in providing equity of access to information and gives clients the option to select specific items for loan. The collections also increase the variety of library materials available through public libraries. In 2001/02 over 74,000 multicultural and ESL items were lent to NSW public libraries.

The State Library compiles and maintains the Community Languages Collection Directory. This directory lists those public libraries that hold community language collections, the languages collected by each library and the number of volumes held in each language. There are collections in 47 community languages across the network and the directory is used by public libraries to refer clients. The directory can be accessed via the State Library website.

In addition to the lending collections mentioned above the Library has over 200 non-English language newspaper titles, including all current LOTE newspapers published in New South Wales. These newspapers are microfilmed ensuring their preservation and availability to present and future clients. The Library also maintains a collection of general encyclopaedias and dictionaries in languages other than English to provide for the basic information needs of non-English speakers.
5.2.2 Legal deposit
Under the Copyright Act 1879-1952, ss.5-7, all NSW publishers are required to deposit one copy of each item published with the State Library, within two months of publication. This includes commercial publishers, as well as individuals, clubs, churches, societies and organisations.

The State Library liaises with multicultural communities to raise awareness of the legal requirement, emphasising that literary works are part of Australia’s cultural heritage. The Library believes that the communities have a strong role to play in preserving the unique multicultural documentary heritage of the State for current and future generations.

5.2.3 Research
In support of NSW public libraries the State Library, through the Public Library Network Research Program, commissions research relevant to the network. One such research project resulted in the publication of Multicultural Library Services in NSW Public Libraries 2001, launched in 2002. The project grew out of the need identified by the Working Group on Multicultural Library Services (NSW) for more comprehensive data relating to levels of library service delivery to multicultural communities in NSW.

The key focus of the project was to complete a comprehensive survey of multicultural service delivery in NSW public libraries. The research included examples of best practice service delivery, both locally and internationally, and provides models for libraries wishing to improve their multicultural library service delivery.

As an outcome of the research one of the issues identified in Multicultural Library Services in NSW Public Libraries 2001 was the high cost of translating information. In many cases the work is duplicated across public libraries that are all endeavouring to reach clients from diverse linguistic backgrounds. In order to produce translation in a more cost effective way the Working Group on Multicultural Library Services (Working Group) has identified the need to work collaboratively to produce the required translations in a more cost efficient manner.

In 2002/03 the research into multicultural library services continued with the commencement of a project focusing on people using public library multicultural services. Clients representing a cross section of ethnic communities were invited to participate in focus groups which were conducted in the participants’ native language. Library users from metropolitan and regional areas were interviewed.

The project aims to develop an overview of the needs of library clients from a non-English speaking background, to evaluate existing collections and services from the client perspective and to provide clear directions for future multicultural collections and services. It is intended that the research will be used to formulate recommendations regarding future multicultural services and collections, to devise strategies for future priorities and directions, to identify key stakeholders for the implementation of the recommendations and to establish a mechanism for the ongoing review of multicultural services.
5.2.4 The Multicultural Purchasing Cooperative

The Multicultural Purchasing Cooperative (MPC) is a leading supplier of library materials in languages other than English to NSW public libraries. The Cooperative was established in the 1970s to source and supply library materials at the lowest possible price by way of bulk orders and discounts. Currently 25 library services throughout the state, with most located in Sydney, purchase materials through the Cooperative. In 2002/03 public libraries purchased 16,624 items in 31 languages at a total cost of $381,048.25

The MPC coordinates the selection of materials by distributing publisher and bookseller catalogues to libraries and by organising combined selection meetings. Selection meetings are held for languages where more than four libraries will be buying. Each year more than 10 selection meetings are held in approximately 15 languages. The Cooperative undertakes all supplier liaison, ordering, invoicing and distribution associated with the subsequent purchases.

In 2002/03 members of the Working Group on Multicultural Library Services identified the need for more cost effective methods of cataloguing multicultural library materials. It was agreed that the most cost effective option for providing multilingual catalogued library materials was to establish a project coordinated through the Cooperative.

The Cooperative forwards the relevant materials to a cataloguing agent where they are catalogued into the National Library of Australia database (Kinetica)26 and returned to the participant libraries as per their order. Libraries download the records into their local system and process the items. While downloading the records libraries have the option of adding their holdings to the national database thus making the materials available for inter library loan.

The aims of this project are to:

- enhance access to community languages collections by improving the standard of cataloguing and increasing access to these records via public library OPACs and web accessible catalogues
- obtain cost efficiencies in the cataloguing of community languages collections by sharing cataloguing resources utilising Kinetica
- improve collection development and inter-library loans of community languages materials by providing access via Kinetica, local OPACs or web catalogues
- establish standards that will produce uniform records across member libraries
- reduce cataloguing backlogs and improve turnaround times

Over the last year eight libraries participated in the project which involved nine languages: Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Korean, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese. A total of 2,175 items were catalogued at a cost of $20,826.27 With this new development the Multicultural Purchasing Cooperative enables public libraries to deliver materials to their clients in a more efficient way as well as freeing staff to be redeployed to multicultural community programs.
5.2.5 Multilingual pamphlets
The State Library has created information pamphlets in 30 languages and distributed them to the respective communities via local public libraries. The pamphlet summarises the core services that public libraries provide to the culturally and linguistically diverse population of NSW. The pamphlets are available to all NSW public libraries via the State Library website.28

5.2.6 Multilingual banners
The State Library also funded five double sided banners that are used by libraries state-wide to promote their NESB services at local events. Made of lightweight materials the banners are easily assembled around an aluminium frame (1m wide x 2m high) for display purposes and can be folded into compact carrying cases for ease of transportation.29

5.2.7 Consultancy and advice services
The State Library Multicultural Consultant provides leadership and advice to NSW public libraries on multicultural policies and issues and on the establishment and development of multicultural services and collections. This service is undertaken in consultation with the Metropolitan Public Libraries Association (MPLA) Working Group on Multicultural Library Services. The Consultant also coordinates and conducts education and training programs on multicultural issues, access, equity, and cultural diversity both for State Library and public library staff.

The Consultant is active in the promotion of NSW multicultural library services to local communities ensuring a high level of consultation with people from ethnic communities, public libraries, professional groups, relevant agencies in the multicultural field, and the community regarding the provision of library services to people from multicultural communities. Liaison with public libraries and community groups is particularly strong.

Monitoring developments that will improve access to library services for people from diverse backgrounds is an increasing role for the Consultant. A recent initiative was the installation of language fonts on PCs that were purchased and distributed to public libraries. This was undertaken as part of the NSW.net initiative which placed more than 700 PCs in public libraries for free community access to the Internet. All 700 terminals had additional fonts installed for the 30 languages most commonly spoken in NSW. The project will bring direct benefit to those wanting access to electronic resources in languages other than English.30

6. Multilingual Campaign to Promote Public Library Services to Multicultural Communities
For many people who immigrate to Australia the concept of a free public library differs, depending on its availability in their home country. For some, libraries are viewed as a luxury only for a select group of people such as academics, students and researchers. For others, it is simply a lack of understanding of the facilities that are available to everyone in their adopted country.

The Metropolitan Public Libraries Association (MPLA), as a consequence of the research done by the Working Group on Multicultural Library Services (NSW), realised that communities had an inadequate knowledge of what libraries had to
offer. It was evident there was a lack of awareness in these communities that material was available in their language and that language was a barrier to accessing information.

The Working Group on Multicultural Library Services applied for a Library Development Grant in 2000/01 to conduct a public relations campaign to promote the range of library services to the culturally diverse populations of Sydney. They were awarded $78,317 to conduct a ground-breaking campaign to raise awareness of free public library services by people from a non-English speaking background.

6.1 Target languages
Following a rigorous process the final selection of languages for the publicity campaign was Arabic, Chinese, English, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese. It was agreed that the generic message of the campaign needed to be direct, in plain English and easy to translate. Based on the research undertaken many of the targeted community groups did not have a strong interest in libraries and their facilities. This meant that the campaign had to work hard in overcoming attitudinal and behavioural perceptions about libraries.

6.2 Campaign message
The two headlines that were eventually chosen were ‘Go to your local library’ and ‘discover a whole new world’ because they reflected the aims and objectives of the campaign whilst presenting the library as an exciting place that has more to offer than just books.

As space was at a premium only three points were promoted:
• learn English,
• borrow books in your own language, and
• access the Internet.

To reinforce the message that public libraries are more than books and are used by a very diverse client group, the photographic artwork complemented the message by featuring images of computers, newspapers, discussion groups and people from all age groups and national backgrounds. The final artwork of the campaign, available on the State library website, clearly illustrates this approach.

6.3 Billboards
A mix of media options was considered and billboards were selected as they provided maximum exposure on a limited budget, being large enough to have the 5 languages plus English. Additional sites were able to be secured from the savings in production costs. Forty billboards went up across metropolitan Sydney between June and December 2001. The sites were strategically chosen to reflect the local government areas that had high concentrations of the targeted languages.

6.4 Postcards and posters
The billboard artwork was adapted for postcards and posters. Postcards were produced with the aim of promoting library services at the local level. They have proven to be an immense success demonstrated by a second reprint separately funded by the libraries. The A2 posters came with an attachment that could be placed at the bottom of the poster to allow each library to add their specific contact details.
The cards and posters were distributed to all libraries in NSW, major Migrant Resource Centres and the community organisations of the language groups targeted. The posters were also sent to educational organisations, local supermarkets, hairdressers, doctors’ surgeries, temples, restaurants, churches, social clubs and sport clubs (eg. soccer) and other places frequented by library non-users to increase awareness of the library services.

6.5 Launch
The campaign was launched at Auburn Library on 25 May 2001 by Stepan Kerkyasharian, Chair of the Community Relations Commission and Dagmar Schmidmaier, State Librarian and Chief Executive. A media kit was distributed on the day. The press release was translated into the 5 major languages of the campaign, and sent to the ethnic newspapers and radio stations.

6.6 Ongoing benefits
All material created in this campaign, such as the billboard advertisements, is available via the Internet on the State Library website.35

The creative material, which belongs to the State Library, can be used as a template for future ventures targeting other community groups.

Three courier vans that move library materials between the Sydney metropolitan public libraries have been turned into moving advertisements with the images and text from the billboard placed on the external walls of the vans.

6.7 Campaign success
The campaign was successful as it stimulated not only the interest of the five targeted communities to use their local library, but also raised awareness in other community groups. In 2000/2001 Fairfield City Library, located in the western suburbs of Sydney, had an increase of 5.31% of issues, or 27,056 loans in their LOTE collections over the previous year (1999/2000) compared to a decrease in other areas of library service.36

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7. Moving forward...the second stage of the multicultural campaign
In 2002/03 the Working Group on Multicultural Library Services was successful in obtaining a second Library Development Grant of $71,830. The grant funds will be used to develop stage two of the awareness campaign to promote the wide range of library services and resources offered to the culturally diverse population of New South Wales through the public library network. The branding established in the 2001 campaign will continue in stage 2 of the campaign using a similar template.
The new campaign will target the southern and eastern suburbs of Sydney. The languages will be Croatian, Greek, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Polish, Russian and Serbian. As the billboards used in the previous campaign are not appropriate for the new target areas the following will be used:

*Bus sides* – which enable specific targeting of languages/ communities within local government areas and library service areas

*Bus interiors* – provide great exposure for a long length of time and allow for language targeting

*Posters* – as used in 2001, but the languages will reflect the community mix of the participating libraries servicing the targeted areas

*Postcards* - as used in 2001 but with the new target languages

*Website* – all materials will be posted on the State Library website

8. **Conclusion**

The strong relationship between the State Library and local authorities continues to ensure the ongoing success of the NSW public library network. The partnership, created by the 1939 *Library Act*, has proved to be of enduring benefit to the partners and to the people of New South Wales. The provision and promotion of public library services to a culturally diverse New South Wales would not be as advanced were it not for this unique State and Local Government partnership.
Appendix 1

Metropolitan Public Libraries Association (MPLA)
Working Group on Multicultural Library Services
The Working Group on Multicultural Library Services of NSW was established in June 1983 and is affiliated with the Metropolitan Public Libraries Association of NSW (MPLA). The Working Group today is a dynamic group of professionals committed to providing leadership in the pursuit of excellence for the provision of library and information services to the NSW multicultural community.

The Working Group on Multicultural Library Services was formed to improve library services and raise awareness among people from NESB.

The mission of the Working Group is to ensure the development and improvement of customer focused public library services for the multicultural community of NSW, recognising that the environment is constantly changing.

The objectives of the Group are to:

- provide leadership in the field of multicultural library service
- provide members of the group with a forum for discussion and for peer support
- raise the profile of multicultural library services within the broader library community
- encourage co-operation and networking amongst public libraries and institutions
- ensure that multicultural services are recognised as a vital component of public library services
- advocate for the equitable distribution of resources and technology

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2 The Australian Human Rights Commission was established in 1981 and later renamed the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.
Providing and promoting public library services to a culturally diverse New South Wales.

18 State Library of New South Wales, Public Libraries Branch, Financial Reports 2002/03. [Unpublished]
36 Fairfield Library and Museum Services *2000/2001 annual report,* page 64.