



Multiculturalism within Queensland Corrective Services

Guidelines for service provision for culturally
and linguistically diverse offenders



Queensland Government
Queensland Corrective Services



Background

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting and celebrating diversity in Queensland. People from culturally diverse backgrounds bring new ideas and experiences which enrich Queensland, both socially and economically. The Queensland Government is dedicated to providing for all Queenslanders and understands that some groups within society, such as those from diverse cultures, require additional assistance to access social justice and equity.

Queensland Corrective Services' (QCS) commitment to the Queensland Government's *Multicultural Queensland – making a world of difference* policy saw the development of QCS' first Multicultural Action Plan. Released on November 2005, the Multicultural Action Plan 2005 -2006 (the Plan) was developed in consultation with staff. It recognises the unique environment in which QCS operates and that there is a clear tension between developing consistent multicultural strategies that meet the needs of an increasing and diverse offender population located throughout the State and meeting operational and organisational demands.

The Plan identified three key outcomes areas to provide a benchmark for QCS to measure its progress against. The key outcomes are:

1. an inclusive, cohesive and open organisation that values cultural diversity
2. staff from diverse cultures have an equal opportunity to benefit from, and contribute to, the organisation
3. cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of offenders is acknowledged and accommodated where practical

Based on the above outcomes, meaningful actions and performance measures were developed for reporting and accountability purposes. Under the Multicultural Action Plan 2005-2006 one of the actions relating to key outcome three, included the development of a guide to assist staff in allocating resources for culturally diverse offenders. These guidelines are a consequence of that action.

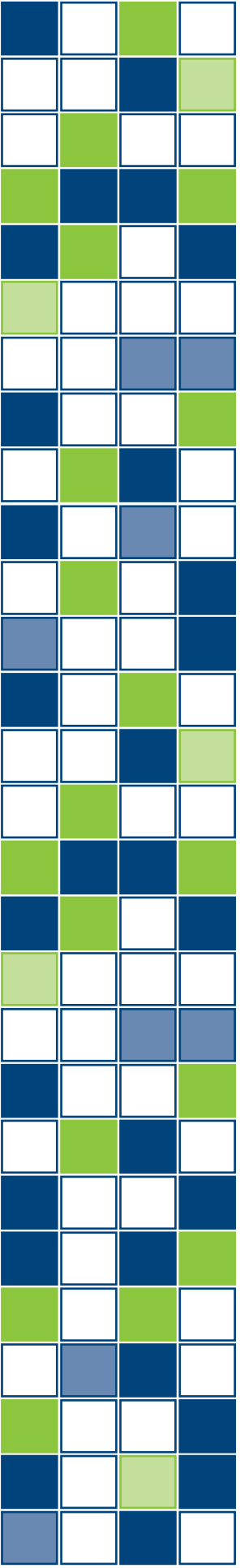
Why is cultural diversity important?

While cultural diversity may be enriching for Queensland overall, it can also mean difficulties for individuals as they seek to interact and integrate into Queensland life. Interaction and integration can be made more difficult when the dimension of cultural diversity includes challenges in beliefs, attitudes and ways of life. These issues are again heightened when there are language difficulties.

Positive outcomes from an atmosphere where multiculturalism is embraced include; a more cohesive and open environment where the cultural diversity of the individual is valued, as well as staff from diverse cultures having an equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to QCS.

Principles – for acknowledging the multicultural needs of offenders

The relationship between the Government and the community in relation to multicultural issues differs significantly to the relationship that is required between the Government and the offender population.



In implementing any multicultural strategies QCS must operate within the confines of safety and security and existing resources. Within these parameters QCS seeks to uphold the following management principles:

- cultural diversity is valued, promoted and celebrated
- diversity within cultural groups is recognised and respected
- social justice values of access, equity, equality and participation are administered
- an environment where staff and offenders do not experience harassment, discrimination or disadvantage due to their cultural or linguistic diversity is continually cultivated
- a culturally sensitive workforce is enhanced by equipping staff with theoretical and practical knowledge in respect of cultural diversity
- collaboration with Government departments and community agencies is conducted in meeting the needs of offenders from diverse cultures
- racism, in any form is not tolerated

Determining appropriate service delivery standards and responses for culturally and linguistically diverse offenders

The following strategies are a guide to assist staff in determining service standards and practical responses for culturally diverse offenders in corrective services facilities or district offices. These strategies highlight just some of the ways QCS can deliver on its commitment to the Government's *Multicultural Queensland – making a world of difference* policy and fulfil its own obligations under the Multicultural Action Plan 2005-2006.

Strategies

Establish an offender's ability to integrate into the correctional system.

To assess the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse offenders the following questions should be asked to identify the degree of difficulty an offender is likely to experience in integrating within the correctional environment,

- Identify the offender's cultural heritage
- Is the offender able to communicate effectively?
- Will language assistance be required?
- Have health issues for the offender been addressed e.g. disability etc?
- Identify family issues eg: parenting role.
- Does the offender have any specific cultural needs?
- Will the offender require spiritual counselling?

Once difficulties in integration for the offender have been identified and specific cultural needs taken into consideration, relevant strategies can be introduced to assist with integration of the culturally diverse offender into a correctional facility.

Cultural risks and needs

Ensure risks and needs of individuals are assessed in a culturally specific manner, accounting for gender roles, parenting-related issues and special needs (for example, refugees, survivors of torture, trauma and disabilities).

The offender's risk assessment should be clearly documented and communicated and participation in spiritual and religious ceremonies of the culture with which the offender identifies encouraged.

Language assistance

Ensure interpreter services are accessed and professionally utilised where required. Access to interpreter services can be found on the following website <http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/multicultural/qldinterpreter/>

Religious needs

Religious requirements should be met where possible. For example, approval for religious aids such as prayer mats in cells.

Responding to the needs of culturally diverse emerging groups

In order to appropriately respond to the needs of culturally diverse emerging groups it will be necessary to identify the numbers of offenders in each group to determine resource allocation. The emergence of a particular group may be self-evident; however, until detailed information can be made available through the Integrated Offender Management System and in order to assist QCS in reporting on culturally and linguistically diverse offenders, all facilities should be aware of the numbers of specific cultural offenders within their facility.

In Queensland, recent studies have identified several new emerging groups within our multicultural society. In 2004, the Premier of Queensland approved the development of a whole-of-government strategy to address the needs of Pacific Islander communities and also identified the need for a similar strategy in respect of African communities. Although numbers within these groups may not be highly visible within our correctional environment, awareness of trends within the wider community will better prepare QCS for future multicultural resource requirements.

Other strategies to assist in responding to the needs of emerging cultural groups include:

- assessment staff trained in dealing with offenders from diverse backgrounds
- ensure risk assessments are clearly documented and communicated
- essential information is translated into the language of the identified cultural group
- corrective services facilities, where possible provide access to media in their mother language, including newspapers, and books
- dissemination of cultural information
- relevant staff / programs / community services engaged
- education/information sessions conducted by community organisations
- cross-cultural training for staff
- employment of staff from diverse cultural backgrounds
- participation in spiritual and religious ceremonies of the culture with which the offender identifies (for example, Chinese New Year, Harmony Day, South Sea Islander Day)
- conducting a relevant focus group to identify issues
- develop collaborative links with key refugee and community agencies



Budget and resource considerations

In developing the QCS' Multicultural Action Plan the confines of safety, security and financial resources were integral considerations. When providing services for culturally and linguistically diverse offenders QCS faces the challenge of developing creative and innovative strategies that can be achieved within existing budgetary confines. In order to enhance QCS' response to the Government's commitment to the *Multicultural Queensland – making a world of difference* policy and work towards a better Queensland for all, any initiatives undertaken should take into consideration the following:

- be fiscally realistic
- identify resource implications
- where possible, build upon strategies already in place

Other resources

In developing the Multicultural Action Plan the following websites were utilised and are valuable resources.

<http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/multicultural/>

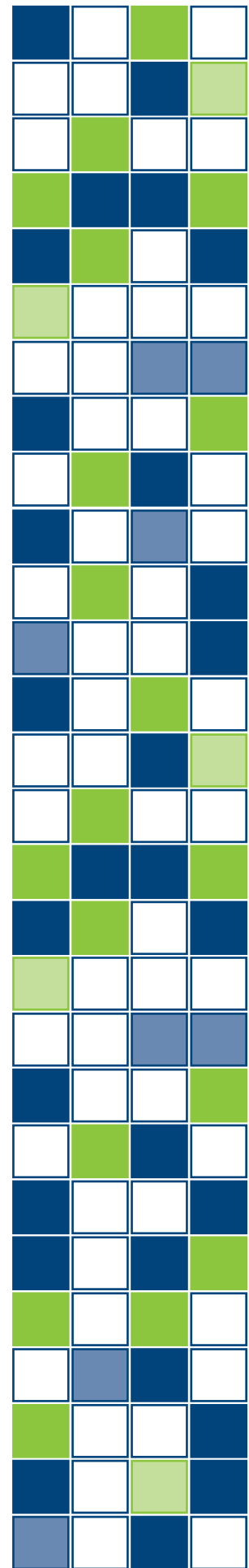
<http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/multicultural/qldinterpreter/>

<http://www.immi.gov.au/multicultural/links.htm>

www.apmab.gov.au

www.yanq.org.au

Any queries regarding the Multicultural Action Plan can be directed to the Strategic Policy and Services Directorate, Policy and Analysis. Phone (07) 3405 6300.



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www.correctiveservices.qld.gov.au