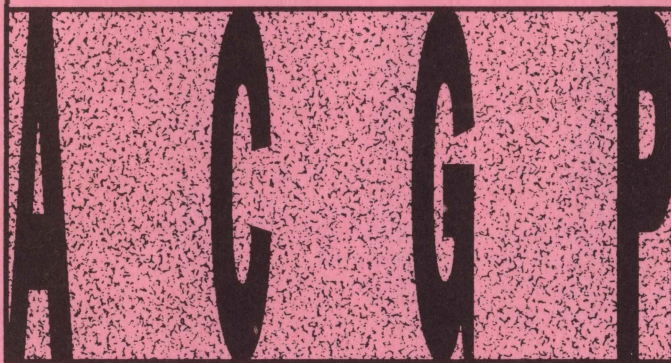


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COMMUNICATING WITH MIGRANTS
The Development of Language Teaching and of Translating and
Interpreting Services in Australia 1945-75

Ann-Mari Jordens

Administration, Compliance and Governability Program
Working Paper No. 12
May 1993



**ADMINISTRATION, COMPLIANCE
& GOVERNABILITY PROGRAM**

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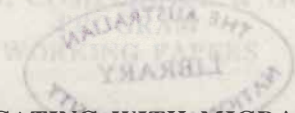
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*Series Editor:
Penelope Hanley*

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ABSTRACT

COMMUNICATING WITH MIGRANTS

This paper traces the long and sometimes tortuous process of setting up administrative structures to assist communication between the approximately 1.7 million non-British migrants who arrived in Australia between 1945-75, and the host community. The Department of Immigration was given the responsibility of facilitating these migrants' compliance with the expectation that they become 'absorbed' into the community. It perceived that this absorption, which it described at various times as 'assimilation', 'integration' or 'settlement', was hindered by inadequate communications. Initially, its prime objective was to develop appropriate English-language training; only later was its attention drawn by mainstream community organisations to the urgent need for interpreting and translating services. The major obstacle confronting these administrators was cultural. Much non-compliance by non-English speaking migrants with the myriad laws and regulations they were expected to obey upon entering Australia, was involuntary. They could not understand the requirements of the unfamiliar culture they had entered, and monolingual Anglo/Celtic administrators and mainstream community organisations found it difficult to understand and respond to their needs. The learning process involved in assisting large numbers of aliens along the path from migrant to settler to citizen not only caused cultural change within the responsible department, it also led to a slow but profound reconceptualisation of Australian national identity.

ABSTRACT

WELCOME
DO
NOT
STAND
THERE



Petty

COMMUNICATING WITH MIGRANTS

The development of language teaching and of translating and interpreting services in Australia 1945-75

INTRODUCTION

Vulnerable groups can cause significant administrative reform and contribute to cultural change, that is why non-compliance is sometimes described as the 'weapon of the weak'. While some forms of non-compliance are evidently quite deliberate (for example welfare fraud or tax-evasion) other forms are involuntary. They result from the failure of administrators effectively to communicate requirements to those expected to comply, or from certain laws and regulations that make demands on sections of the community which, for one reason or another, they are incapable of meeting. Both voluntary and involuntary non-compliance erode the authority of the State. Consequently a great deal of the time of government administrators is spent in monitoring compliance and in devising cost-effective strategies to counter non-compliance.

Bruce Petty's cartoon brilliantly illustrates involuntary non-compliance. His non-complying immigrant is, however, depicted as a victim who is having the ground cut from beneath his feet (by some mindless bureaucrat?). Non-compliance can also be a powerful incentive for administrative and cultural change. If enough migrants stand before this notice long enough, administrators who have a responsibility for getting them somewhere will realise that they have a problem, and will put their minds to producing solutions (if only to protect their Minister from the political embarrassment of having too many migrants standing around in the wrong place not knowing what to do). Eventually they will translate the notice into a language the migrant can understand, provide him or her with a qualified interpreter, or even set up a telephone interpreter service so that large numbers of migrants can comply with a range of government expectations. They will improve their access to English instruction so that they will not have the same problem in the future. This paper

language teaching, while innovative, was programmed at times which precluded many migrants from taking advantage of it.

As funding increased, participation levels declined. Part of the reason for this lay in the reliance by the government on mainstream community organisations to publicise these classes among non-English speaking migrants. The administrators responsible neglected to monitor class retention rates and to consult consumer representatives to discover the causes of declining participation. They relied too much for advice on policy and planning on elite and monolingual members of the Australian establishment, whose background and experience prevented them from perceiving the practical problems confronting migrants.

The philosophy of the party in power for most of this period led it to rely too much on the voluntary efforts of mainstream community organisations to encourage migrants to learn English, and to expect too little of major employers of migrants (both government and private). Those who benefited most from migrant labour were never required to allow AMES classes to be conducted in the workplace during working hours.

Significant sections of the migrant community did not utilise these services and many who did, did not persist to a level where their understanding of English was adequate enough to allow them to gain access to the community services to which they were entitled. The result was social exclusion and poverty.

Failure to make adequate English-learning accessible to all migrants resulted in migrant non-compliance with the government's expectation that they become absorbed into the host community and proceed to citizenship. This was reflected in the statistics of eligible migrants who did not apply to become citizens, who applied but were rejected on language grounds, and of those who abandoned their initial settlement goals and left Australia permanently.

The cultural context

European immigrants to post-war Australia entered a monolingual society. The principal foreign language taught in Australian secondary schools was French, because France was the nearest foreign country to England and no one questioned its relevance to Australians. Very few Australians needed to use French and most rapidly forgot it on leaving

school. As William Lawrence, Liberal Member for Wimmera in Victoria lamented to the House of Representatives in September 1953:

Those of us who gained a smattering of languages such as French and German in the course of our studies at school, have forgotten nearly all that we learned because we have not had an opportunity to converse with Frenchmen and Germans in their own language.³

The few Australians who travelled overseas almost invariably made the long and expensive journey 'home' to England. Australians at every level of society, therefore, had no understanding of what it was like to live in a country whose language was foreign and whose laws, regulations and institutions were unknown and inaccessible.

The combination of good-will and lack of understanding which was to confuse the large numbers of non-English speaking migrants soon to enter Australia, was articulated in Parliament in 1945 by Leslie Haylen (ALP NSW), an ex-serviceman and prominent promoter of migration. While he urged the provision of basic English classes on migrant ships because lack of English would lead to isolation and segregation on the migrants' arrival, he opined that all commands and instructions on board should be in English.⁴

Australian monolingualism had been reinforced by ensorship regulations during both world wars which produced fear and suspicion of those using foreign languages in Australia. In 1945 newspapers could not be printed in Australia in a foreign language except by permission of the government on the recommendation of the security service. An Italian newspaper published in Sydney, *Il Risveglio*, which had received such permission, was criticised in Parliament by Dame Annabelle Rankin (Liberal Qld.) for its stated intention of helping Italian workers defend their rights to equal pay and treatment with Australian workers, particularly those employed in the Civil Constructional Corps. Dame Annabelle complained that two-thirds of the paper was printed in Italian and asked Dr Evatt, the responsible Minister, to 'consider the danger to national security of newspapers in certain foreign languages circulating in Australia, and prohibit their publication unless printed wholly in English.'⁵

³ Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD), House of Representatives (HR), vol 1, p. 815, 30.9.1953.

⁴ CPD, HR, vol 181, pp. 161-2, 28.3.1945.

⁵ CPD, HR, vol 181, p. 472, 8.3.1945.

This attitude persisted long after war-time regulations had ended. It was clearly articulated in 1958, for example, by former postmaster Dominic Costa (ALP NSW) who told the House that his Party believed that 'there could be a danger in having newspapers published in Australia in foreign languages' and suggested that 'if a newspaper must be published in a foreign language, each foreign language component should be accompanied by an English translation.'⁶

The need for migrants rapidly to master English in order to assimilate into the host society and its workforce was well appreciated, and from 1948 considerable effort both at Federal and State levels was put into providing migrants with a basic knowledge of spoken English. The inadequacy of basic English to migrants in their daily interaction with this society was not, however, sufficiently appreciated. Neither the mainstream community nor the administrators responsible for their welfare appreciated the difficulties they faced when they attempted to exercise the rights and gain access to the services to which they were entitled, or to understand and comply with the myriad laws and regulations to which they were subject as residents or citizens. It was not until the early 1970s that the Department responsible for the absorption of migrants into Australian society began to comprehend the extent of the need for more widely available and professional language teaching, and for translating and interpreting services throughout Australia, and to take a positive role in the provision of services to meet this need.

THE ADULT MIGRANT EDUCATION SCHEME (AMES)

A proposal to initiate English language training for the influx of refugees expected following the July 1947 agreement between the Australian government and the International Refugee Organisation (IRO), was approved by the Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, put to the Information Department on 21 November 1947 and publicly announced on 3 March 1948. At this time only 8,230 non-British migrants had arrived in Australia. A sum of £10,000 was earmarked in the 1948-49 Budget for 'education of displaced persons from Europe

⁶ CPD, HR, vol 18, p.88, 27.2.1958. For a discussion of the origins of Australian monolingualism see Michael Clyne, 'Monolingualism, Multilingualism and the Australian Nation', in *Australian National Identity*, Charles A. Price (ed.), Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, 1991, pp. 83-98.

after discharge from reception centres', but only a little over half of this was actually spent.⁷ The scheme was considered by the Immigration Advisory Council (IAC) in April 1948 as 'an experiment the like of which, so far as is known, has not been attempted previously anywhere else in the world.'⁸

The aim of the Commonwealth government's Migrant (Adult Education) Scheme (AMES) was to give migrants 'an elementary knowledge of the English tongue and to meet their practical everyday wants, and in addition some knowledge of Australian civics.'⁹ Responsibility for coordinating policy and funding the scheme lay with the Department of Immigration (despite an attempt in March 1949 by the Department of Education to take control of the scheme). Following an agreement between the Commonwealth and State Education Departments, at the end of 1951, its administration became the responsibility of the State Education Departments with technical advice and services being provided by the Commonwealth Office of Education.

Initially intended only for refugees, it was extended to all aliens by Cabinet on 6 December 1948 following a recommendation by the IAC. The scheme offered free English instruction in four different forms — class instruction, correspondence courses, radio programs, and shipboard education.

Class-room education

All adult migrants were eligible to attend four hours of class instruction weekly for as long as they needed. Classes were formed in metropolitan areas where twelve migrants were enrolled, and in country areas when a class of six could be formed. The State Education Department closed classes when enrolments fell below nine in metropolitan areas and four in country areas. Instruction was given by school teachers who were paid extra for working after hours according to prevailing rates (which were the same for male and female teachers

⁷ Department of Immigration, *Australian Immigration Quarterly Statistical Bulletin*, vol 2, no 1, November 1961, p. 14, *Budget Papers*, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.

⁸ 'A History of Adult Migrant Education', pp. 2-3, paper prepared by Miss J. Ennor, 1962, 64/45732, Commonwealth Record Series (CRS) A446/96, Australian Archives (AA).

⁹ N. W. Lamidey to T.H.E. Heyes, Secretary, Department of Immigration, minute, 'Adult Migrant Education Scheme', 15.2.1957, 140/5/20, CRS A445, AA.

except in NSW and Victoria, where women teachers were paid less than men).¹⁰

These classes were held at night, which precluded the attendance of shift-workers and most married women. Although early enrolments were disappointing, Harold Holt as Minister for Immigration, resisted suggestions that English classes be made compulsory, and an IAC suggestion in March 1951 that an incentive be provided in the form of a remittance of part of refugees' two-year employment contract was rejected by the Citizenship Convention.¹¹ In an attempt to improve accessibility, day-time classes for women were held in some pre-school and Baby Health Centres by 1954 (such classes were not permitted in NSW Baby Health Centres), but the Department was unsuccessful in its attempts to persuade employers to allow classes on their premises during working hours.¹²

Teachers followed a two-part text book entitled *English for Newcomers to Australia*, which initially had 140 units (the number of units was reduced to 114 when it was found that few students remained in classes beyond that level). The aim was to enable migrants to speak English and to understand it in the shortest possible time. There was no systematic teaching of grammar, and reading and writing in English were not stressed. Students were taught common patterns of English speech by listening to commonly used English sentences and being taught to imitate them. Although the teachers were not especially trained to teach migrants English, some attempt was made to assist them by supplying them with a special version of the text book, holding demonstrations of the method during vacation periods, and sending advisory teachers to visit their classes two or three times a year. The Commonwealth Office of Education offered them suggestions in the form of two circulars *English — By Way of Introduction* and *English — a New Language*.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ CPD, HR, vol 1, p. 339, 12.3.1951; 'A History of Adult Migrant Education', p. 10, paper prepared by Miss J. Ennor, 1962, 64/45732., CRS, A446/96, AA.

¹² Department of Immigration summary of comments on resolution 42 of the 1954 Citizenship Convention, 146/8/2, CRS A445/1 AA.

¹³ N. W. Lamidey to T.H.E. Heyes, Secretary, Department of Immigration, minute, 'Adult Migrant Education Scheme', 15.2.1957, 140/5/20, CRS A445, AA.

Correspondence lessons

Correspondence lessons for migrants who could not attend classes began in May 1949. They followed 34 separate lesson booklets entitled *Correspondence Course for New Australians* and the only pre-requisite was a knowledge of the English alphabet and script. Four special introductory lessons were offered to those with a limited knowledge of their own language.¹⁴

Radio broadcasts

The use of radio for the teaching of English was suggested by the Director of the Office of Education to the Secretary of the Department of Immigration in May 1948. Classes began in April 1949 with the Australian Broadcasting Commission broadcasting two language lessons weekly, without charge to the Commonwealth. A booklet produced by the Education Department containing the script of forthcoming broadcasts, *For New Australians*, was posted monthly to enrolled migrants.

The ABC broadcast its 15-minute migrant education programs very early in the morning and in 1952 refused a Department of Immigration offer to fund more frequent programs at times more convenient for migrants on the grounds that such changes would interfere with the entertainment of its non-migrant listeners. Until November 1954 the Commonwealth Office of Education designed and controlled the programs. After that date it continued to supply the script but the ABC took over production.

An ABC survey of clients in 1959 found the classes attracted fewer than 1% of listeners in capital cities throughout Australia.¹⁵ Later other media were employed. In 1966 the Government issued records based on the radio/correspondence course and in 1967 the ABC screened a BBC Television English language series entitled 'Walter and Connie', sponsored by the Department of Immigration. By March 1974, 40 one-hour television programs teaching English language and elements of Australian citizenship, directed specifically at migrant

¹⁴ Ibid and 'A History of Adult Migrant Education', Section ii p. 3, paper prepared by Miss J. Ennor, 1962, 64/45732, CRS A446/96, AA.

¹⁵ Ibid.

women, were being screened in the Wollongong, Newcastle and Ballarat regions, and were scheduled for screening in the capital cities. Production had commenced on a further 78 half-hour programs.¹⁶ As migrant women had a higher participation rate in the workforce than non-migrant women in the 1970s, the efficacy of such day-time television programs is doubtful. It was not until 1972 that language classes catering for special groups such as women and adolescents, were introduced.¹⁷

Pre-embarkation and shipboard education

A shipboard education scheme was conducted for refugees brought to Australia under the IRO, from the middle of 1948 to the end of 1951. Education officers not only taught English, they also did a good deal of welfare and liaison work. Their numbers were never sufficient and of the 99 ships that sailed for Australia only 53 had education officers on board. Shipboard education lapsed with the demise of the IRO.¹⁸

The scheme was revived in 1954 when the Australian Government negotiated an agreement with the International Committee for European Migration (ICEM) whereby Australian Government-funded language teachers travelled on migrant ships as ICEM staff. The first six Australian teachers sailed to Europe in March 1955. One (sometimes two), usually bi-lingual, language teachers travelled on each ship and were assisted by volunteers from among the English-speaking passengers. A publication *English on the Way* containing 36 units, for use in the shipboard classes, was introduced in March 1955.¹⁹

Except for a brief period between mid-1949 and February 1951, hopes of establishing pre-embarkation language classes in refugee camps in Europe were not realised. Pre-embarkation language instruction was

¹⁶ CPD, HR, vol 61, p. 3014, 19.11.1968; Paper, 'Measures the Government has taken of Particular Concern to Women', prepared in response to a request from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 9.4.1974, 74/75801, CRS A446/51 AA.

¹⁷ CPD, Senate (S), vol 52, 31.8.1972.

¹⁸ 'A History of Adult Migrant Education', Section ii, p. 3-5, paper prepared by Miss J. Ennor, 1962, 64/45732, CRS A446/96, AA.

¹⁹ N. W. Lamidey to T.H.E. Heyes, Secretary, Department of Immigration, minute, 'Adult Migrant Education Scheme', 15.2.1957, 140/5/20, CRS A445, AA and 'A History of Adult Migrant Education', Section ii, pp. 5-6, paper prepared by Miss J. Ennor, 1962, 64/45732, CRS A446/96, AA.

introduced in 1969 and by 1972 extended to France, Scandinavia Yugoslavia and Turkey. An additional \$150,000 was contributed to ICEM in 1972 for language teaching in Greece, Italy and Germany and to a lesser extent in Malta, Belgium and the Netherlands. However only about half the amount budgeted between 1970-73 for pre-embarkation and shipboard language teaching was actually spent.²⁰

The Home Tutor Scheme

As a result of a series of reports to the Government by the Migrant Education Committee of the Immigration Advisory Council in October 1972, October 1973 and June 1974, the Department of Labor and Immigration produced a series of 'Home Tutorial' kits for use by voluntary organisations such as the YWCA, the CWA and the Good Neighbour Councils. The Scheme was launched early in 1974 and at the end of 1974-75 some 1,334 tutors were involved in teaching English to migrant families in their homes.²¹

Assessing the adequacy of AMES

From late 1952, concern was expressed by a number of bodies at the adequacy of the standard of English language training being offered to migrants. In August 1952 the issue was raised by State Education Authorities at a meeting of the government departments involved in administering the scheme. The meeting agreed that the existing course provided a reasonable but not adequate standard of English, and that it was desirable that 12 advanced course lessons be prepared, to be offered only to genuinely isolated students.

In January 1953 delegates to the Citizenship Convention also discussed the adequacy of the level of instruction offered by the Scheme. They recommended that a more advanced course be offered to enable migrants to gain access to education designed for native-born adult Australians. In response, the IAC in April 1953 appointed a sub-committee to investigate the standard which should be offered to

²⁰ 'A History of Adult Migrant Education', pp. 3-5 and section ii, pp. 1-3, paper prepared by Miss J. Ennor, 1962, 64/45732, CRS A446/96, AA; Ministerial Statement on Migrant Education and Welfare Services; CPD, S, vol 52, p. 614, 31.8.1972; *Budget Papers* 1969-73.

²¹ CPD, HR, vol 96, p. 1720, 2.10.1975.

might be) and stressed that 'no preferential treatment should be afforded to migrants.' The Council appointed a committee to review the costs, benefits and scope of the scheme.³¹

Advocates of the 'user pays' principle were vocal in this Committee. Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams expressed his view that migrants should have to personally assume some portion of the costs as 'some of the best types were not coming forward to these classes because of the present policy of providing free services and tuition.' Charging even a nominal sum would 'help to attract the better element amongst the migrants.' Senator Dame Nancy Buttfield (Lib. SA) and Darling also supported a fee. The Committee recommended the establishment of a small inter-departmental committee of three experts from the Commonwealth, NSW and Victorian Departments of Education, to advise it.³²

While the experts focussed almost entirely on the possible effects of proposed cost-cutting measures, they also looked for the first time at some AMES clients. While it was impossible to assess client satisfaction with the quality of the language instruction offered, as statistics were not kept by AMES on retention rates, the NSW Department of Education officer, A.H. Pelham, analysed the progress of 340 students in correspondence courses who enrolled in March 1955. He found that they remained on course for approximately 13 months but that only 60 (18%) of the group completed all 34 lessons. Most (40%) completed the first 20 lessons only. The committee of experts did not favour the introduction of a fee on the grounds that it would discourage the involvement of the less educated migrants who need English language training most, and poured cold water on most of the other cost-cutting alternatives.³³

The IAC Committee appointed to examine the AMES accepted the experts recommendations and subsequently concluded that no major

³¹ Minutes of meeting of the IAC 25/26.10.1956, 140/5/20, CRS A445, AA. Members of the Committee were: Mr Gordon Freeth, MP, Dr J. R. Darling O.B.E., Senator N Buttfield, Hon P. J. Clarey, MP, Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, K.B.E., C.B, D.S.O., Mr L. Withall, O.B.E.

³² Minutes of meeting of the IAC 25/26.10.1956, 140/5/20, CRS A445, AA.

³³ Report of the Committee of Experts 27.3.1957, 140/5/20, CRS A445, AA.

savings could be made without reducing the value of the scheme, although the Minister, Athol Townley, remained concerned at its cost.³⁴

At no time in these discussions was the number of migrants enrolled in AMES courses related to the numbers of non-English speaking migrants in Australia. The preoccupation with cost-saving strategies prevented sufficient attention being given to the adequacy of the scheme to meet the basic settlement needs of such migrants and the question of what was the level necessary to meet the 'basic everyday needs' of migrants was never examined. Discussion within the IAC tended to reflect the cultural values of the mainstream community leaders on the committee, rather than the objective needs of the client community. The opinion of education administrators, who at least made some attempt to assess migrant responses, however, prevailed with decision-makers.

At the heart of the debate on the costs of teaching migrants English lay pro-British and assimilationist cultural values. Such a perspective led to a passive attitude towards the provision of settlement services. Australia should have as many migrants as it had 'capacity to absorb' declared NSW ALP parliamentarian Dominic Costa in 1958, adding:

We believe that British immigrants should constitute 60 per cent. of the total.

We do not adopt this view because of any prejudice, but because we think it is wise to preserve the British outlook and the British stock of this country.

Another advantage is that British immigrants are easier to assimilate than non-British immigrants, because they understand our language and our laws. They are like us in every way...³⁵

Another of his right-wing Catholic colleagues, Francis Stewart, wanted to submit migrants to a mandatory English test after two years residence in Australia, but these attitudes towards migrant languages were not representative of the attitudes of the ALP as a whole. The Victorian ALP in 1960 conducted segments of the radio program 'Victoria's Labour Hour' in migrant languages, but abandoned this following representations to the Minister for Immigration from grazier and ex-serviceman Winston Turnbull (CP Vic.), who opposed foreign

³⁴ Note 'Committee on Migrant Education Service' by J. R. Darling 26.4.57, A. L. Nutt, Acting Secretary, Department of Immigration to Minister, 29.5.1957 with annotation by Minister, 140/5/20, CRS A445, AA.

³⁵ CPD, HR, vol 18, p.88, 27.2.1958.

language broadcasts on the grounds that 'we want migrants in this country to speak the English language.'³⁶

These views were shared by some Government members but not all. Hubert Opperman, grandson of a German immigrant, who was to become Minister for Immigration from 1963-66, had an entirely different perspective. He estimated in 1959 that he had approximately 10,000 migrants from a number of language groups in his electorate, and warned his parliamentary colleagues that 'we who have lived here all our lives should not expect the newcomer to put on the cloak of citizenship and fit into our way of life without some difficulty.' He criticised the insensitive and parochial manner in which migrants were often discussed in the press and in Parliament 'as though they were a new breed of cattle, oblivious to human feelings,' and argued that they should not be required to be able to speak English before being granted citizenship: 'if migrants desire to become Australians it does not matter very much whether they pronounce their words correctly or put them into the correct sequence. Let them become Australians and belong to Australia', he urged.³⁷

Politicians became increasingly concerned at the failure of migrants to become Australian citizens. In 1960 Edward Gough Whitlam (ALP NSW) asked the Minister for Immigration how many eligible aliens had not applied for citizenship and how many applications for citizenship had been refused. The reply revealed that 215,622 eligible aliens had not sought citizenship and 8,286 had been refused; 3,947 because of their inadequate knowledge of English and of the 'responsibilities and privileges of citizenship.' The Labor Party at this time was more concerned about the 194 migrants who had been rejected on security grounds than in pursuing the reasons for the failure of large numbers of migrants to master sufficient English, despite their desire to become full Australian citizens.³⁸

Later the ALP shifted its focus to language-related obstacles to citizenship. Complaining about a proposed cut of over £78,000 in expenditure on migrant English in the 1962-63 Budget, Senator James McClelland pointed to the disparity between migrant intake and the numbers taking up citizenship, claiming only one third of eligible

³⁶ CPD, HR, vol 24, p. 326, 19.8.1958 and vol 27, p. 2242, 2.6.1960.

³⁷ CPD, HR, vol 22, p. 132, 19.2.1959.

³⁸ CPD, HR, vol 28, pp. 1136-38, 20.9.1960.

migrants had become Australian citizens. Lack of 'an adequate knowledge of English' or of 'the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship' was responsible for the rejection of 9,102 applications for citizenship between 1961-70.³⁹

Enrolments in English classes declined in the early 1960s. In August 1962 there were 17,169 students enrolled in 1,124 classes, in contrast to 20,228 students and 1,242 classes the previous year. Correspondence students had also declined from 11,015 to 9,074 in the same period. By March 1963 enrolments in English classes had declined to 16,500 and to 8,700 in correspondence classes. By June 1963, 994,104 non-British migrants had arrived in Australia since October 1945, outnumbering British migrants by more than 11,000. From 1966 the Department of Immigration began publishing annual statistics of migrants attending language courses in its *Quarterly Statistical Summary* and by 1969 there were approximately 22,000 students in classes, correspondence and radio courses.⁴⁰

The failure of the government to provide more than a minimum level of English was dramatically highlighted in November 1962 by a Belgian woman in Bonegilla who went on a hunger strike over the inability of her husband to pursue his teaching career. As Senator Henty pointed out, the level of English offered at the hostel was inadequate to equip him for his profession. Full-time intensive English courses for professionally trained and other educationally advanced migrants were introduced for the first time in 1969, largely as a result of the influx of skilled migrants from Czechoslovakia. Migrants were paid a living allowance to attend these courses.⁴¹

By the end of the 1960s there had been a significant cultural shift, reflected in the terminology used both within the Department of Immigration and in Parliament. No longer was the issue of language teaching discussed in relation to 'assimilation' but as a strategy to promote 'integration' — a process which was seen as involving various government instrumentalities, and a matter of ethnic and cultural as

³⁹ CPD, S, vol 22, pp. 1126-27 and vol 50, p. 2046, 24.11.1971.

⁴⁰ CPD, S, vol 22, p. 1130, 24.10.1962; CPD, HR, vol 38, p. 49, 26.3.1963; *Auditor-General's Report 1962-63*; Department of Immigration, *Australian Immigration Quarterly Statistical Bulletin*, vol 2, no 1, November 1961; CPD, S, vol 42, p. 1074, 18.9.1969.

⁴¹ CPD, S, vol 22, p. 1531; *Auditor-General's Report 1969-70*, p. 146; and 1970-71, p. 155; CPD, HR, vol 61, p. 3014, 19.11.1968, p. 3099, 21.11.1968.

well as language differences. In his Department of Immigration Budget Statement for 1971-72, the Auditor General for the first time referred to funding for the education of 'language handicapped adults and children in Australia.'⁴²

Some embarrassing enquiries

The first in a series of reports on migrant poverty published by Professor Ronald Henderson in 1970 provoked a defensive reaction within the Department of Immigration.⁴³ 'The basic fallacy involved in extrapolating from the survey is that while it gives a fair picture of those poor who are migrants, it ignores those migrants who are not poor', the Programme Development Sub-section reported.⁴⁴ However the appointment by the Prime Minister, William McMahon, of Professor Henderson to a non-parliamentary commission of inquiry into poverty in Australia on 29 August 1972 meant that the focus on the causes of poverty, including migrant poverty, would intensify in the coming years. Departmental defensiveness and procrastination on the issue of the adequacy of the AMES were clearly not going to suffice.

Parliamentary pressure to account for the increasing numbers of migrants departing permanently from Australia resulted in reports on this topic by the Immigration Advisory Council's Committee on Social patterns in 1967 and 1973. A Department of Immigration survey of migrant employment problems completed in November 1971 for the second inquiry on the causes of migrant departures, revealed that the most important single employment problem among the migrants surveyed was language and communication. Only a small percentage of migrants studied, however, were attending English classes. It also found that Commonwealth Employment Offices had inadequate numbers of appropriately qualified multi-lingual staff and that referral and counselling services for migrants were inadequate.⁴⁵

⁴² CPD, S, vol 42, pp. 1068-70, pp. 1073-74, 18.9.1969; *Auditor-General's Report, 1971-72*, p. 50.

⁴³ Ronald F. Henderson, Alison Harcourt, R. J. A. Harper, *People in Poverty: A Melbourne Survey*, University of Melbourne, 1970, chapter 8, 'Migrants' by Jean McCaughey, pp. 119-45.

⁴⁴ Minute, Program Development sub-Section to the Assistant Secretary, Planning and Development Branch, 12.1.1972, 75/78903, CRS A446 T31, AA.

⁴⁵ Report of the Immigration Advisory Council, 29.11.1971, 75/80969, CRS A446 T31, AA; Paper for IAC Committee on survey of migrant employment problems, 29.11.1971, 75/80866, CRS A446 T31, AA.

By 1972-73 the budget for part-time adult English classes was almost \$2 million, over \$1 million was spent on full-time intensive English classes, and over \$5 million on child migrant education. Despite the growth in expenditure, the numbers of migrants attending classes continued to decline throughout the early 1970s. While classes had attracted 15,581 migrants in 1970, this declined to 10,751 in 1973 and to 8,601 in 1975. The numbers enrolled in correspondence courses remained fairly constant, between 7-8,000, over this period. On 14 June 1974, responsibility for migrant education was removed from the portfolio of the Department of Immigration.

An important reason for the failure of the AMES to attract the migrants who needed it lay in the failure of the Liberal Party Governments to adequately market this service among migrants. Liberal philosophy, as Senator Greenwood explained in 1969, looked to community bodies to supply and support migrant settlement services. Although the Department of Immigration attempted to publicise its language classes in the form of posters and pamphlets, it largely looked to the Good Neighbour Movement to encourage migrants to attend them.⁴⁶

The Liberal government, in power from 1950-72, made no attempt to require the major firms which benefited most from migrant manpower to encourage their employees to learn English by allowing AMES classes to be conducted at the workplace during working hours. It made some attempt to encourage the teaching of English in the workplace, but it was not until 1965 that government-funded language classes were conducted in certain factories. By 1968 an English course designed for use in places of employment was being used in 26 firms in NSW, but this was too little, too late.⁴⁷ Consequently, there was a great and unmet need for interpreters and for the provision of information in translation for workers. The government did nothing to require firms to provide interpreters and translators, largely because it only began to appreciate this need in the early 1970s, shortly before losing office.

The Labor government was more proactive but also stopped short of compulsion. In 1974 the Department of Labor and Immigration published 50,000 copies of a leaflet 'English in Industry', to encourage

⁴⁶ Department of Immigration summary of comments on resolution 42 of the 1954 Citizenship Convention, 146/8/2, A445/1, AA; CPD, S, vol 42, p. 1077.

⁴⁷ *Auditor General's Report 1965-66*, p. 62; CPD, HR, vol 61, p. 3013, 19.11.1968.

employers to conduct English classes for employees, and to encourage migrant workers to join these classes. The leaflets were translated into Arabic, Turkish, Greek, Italian, Serbo-Croat and Spanish.⁴⁸

The Immigration Advisory Council, in a series of reports on migrant education during 1972-74, urged the government to set the example to private industry by arranging courses in its own factories and institutions which employed significant numbers of non-English speaking migrants. The Department of Labour and Immigration approached the relevant Departments and authorities and by October 1975 had succeeded in having such courses established by several Departments.⁴⁹ The introduction of workplace English classes in non-government industries, however, was slow. General Motors Holden initiated them at its Elizabeth plant in South Australia only in 1987, and Mitsubishi will introduce them some time in 1993.

ADULT MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM ENROLMENTS AND COSTS 1951-1973

DATE	CLASSES	CORRESPONDENCE COURSES	DEPT. OF IMMIGRATION BUDGET	TOTAL ALIEN SETTLER ARRIVALS SINCE 1945
1951	11,000	6,000	£163,925	190,842
1952	18,238	9,336	£280,507	390,000
1953	15,212	12,395	£303,513	430,053
1956	16,500	12,641	£415,000	576,000
1961	20,228	11,015	£503,596	887,553
1962	17,169	9,074	£443,097	943,802
1963	16,500	8,700	£447,845	994,104
1967	13,003	6,223	\$968,381	1.2 M
1970	15,481	7,608	\$1.4 M	1.3 M
1972	11,874	8,134	\$2.1 M	1.4 M
1973	10,751	7,481	\$2 M	1.5 M
1975	8,601	7,871	N/A	1.7 M

⁴⁸ CPD, HR, vol 92, p. 4826, 5.12.1974.

⁴⁹ CPD, HR, vol 86, pp. 1719-20, 2.10.1975.

For a growing number of migrants from an increasingly diverse range of language groups who were unable or unwilling to attend AMES classes, access to the range of community services to which they were entitled, or compliance with the myriad laws and regulations to which they were subject as citizens or permanent residents, was extremely difficult.⁵⁰

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN

Constitutional responsibility for the education of children lies with the States. The Department of Immigration, therefore, did not initially become involved in the education of migrant children. State governments, however, saw the task of facilitating migrant settlement as a Commonwealth responsibility, and failed to perceive the problems migrant children and their non-English speaking parents were having gaining access to educational services. It was not until the 1960s and early 1970s when political embarrassment was caused by Labor party spokesmen and mainstream community bodies concerned that the cycle of poverty and social disadvantage was repeating itself in the second generation of migrants, that solutions were sought. These solutions required Commonwealth/State cooperation, a process that was fraught with difficulties.

Mainstream culture also hindered the adaptation of migrant children to the host community. The widely-held assumption that language learning was easy for children, was articulated by the Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt, in 1956. He told Parliament:

The children present the least of our problems... because we have found that they are readily adaptable to the Australian way of life, and quickly acquire a knowledge of the language. Certainly they do so once they begin their schooling, and, indeed, the facility with which the children pick up the language often enables them to assist the parents to acquire a working knowledge of English.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Paper dated 29.11.1971, 75/80866, CRS A446 T31 AA; *Australian Immigration, Quarterly Statistics*, December 1973; *Auditor-General's Report 1973-74*, p. 69.

⁵¹ CPD, HR, vol 9, p. 1189, 11.4.1956.

Although James Cairns (ALP Vic.) raised the question of the teaching of English to children in school hours in 1963,⁵² it was not until 1966 that the issue was more actively pursued in Parliament by the Opposition. William O'Connor (ALP NSW) whose electorate of Dalley included three major migrant hostels with more than 2,000 migrants, argued for more Commonwealth funding to meet the demands created locally by large-scale migration. The impact of immigration on two high schools in his electorate had produced a situation which was 'becoming nothing short of a national scandal,' he claimed. About 40% of students at the Port Kembla High School had migrant parents, and 32 classes had to be conducted in 18 classrooms. Berkley High school, designed to accommodate 800 students, had an enrolment of 1,020 and 14 classes with no permanent rooms.⁵³

In 1967 Gordon Scholes (ALP Vic.) drew the attention of the Prime Minister, Harold Holt, to the educational handicaps experienced by migrant children because of their lack of English, and asked the Commonwealth to make grants to the States to allow special schools to be set up for the teaching of English. Holt expressed his satisfaction with the success with which Australia had absorbed more than 2 million migrants and claimed that no complaints about problems encountered by migrant children had come to his notice. However less than two months later Holt revised this somewhat cavalier answer, informing the House that 'this is a matter with which both the Department of Immigration and the Department of Education and Science are concerned, and about which discussions have been had with State Education authorities,' adding:

There is no doubt that a child who comes to Australia from a country where English is not spoken does meet with difficulties, particularly where his parents do not speak English. However, I am informed that all States have introduced some special provisions to cope with the language problems of migrant children and the relevant Commonwealth Departments will, of course, continue to maintain their interest in the question.⁵⁴

The Opposition pursued the matter of Commonwealth funding for special language teaching for migrant children in 1968. It was informed that nothing would be done until the results of a year-long

⁵² CPD, HR, vol 38, p. 48, 26.3.1963.

⁵³ CPD, HR, vol 51, p. 936, 19.4.1966.

⁵⁴ CPD, HR, vol 56, p. 1928, 19.9.1967 and vol 57, pp. 2614-15.

experiment by the NSW Department of Education on the best method of teaching English to school children were available and had been circulated to all the States for their comment.⁵⁵ The Government obviously did not think the problem was an urgent one.

The following year Gordon Bryant (ALP Vic.) painted a graphic picture of the plight of migrant children in inner Melbourne schools. In one Malvern school there were sixteen language groups ranging from half a dozen Turkish-speaking children, none of whose parents spoke English, to 500 newly-arrived Italian children 'It is a problem that the education system in Victoria is not equipped to tackle. The Commonwealth is the only authority which can do something about it,' he argued, as it was a problem the Commonwealth had created. He pointed out that in 1968, 35-40,000 migrants between 5 and 19 years of age had arrived in Australia. As the average school in metropolitan areas accommodated about 800 children, he argued, there should be between 45 and 50 new schools constructed to cater for this influx and some 2,000 additional teachers employed. Most pressure was on the older schools in inner-city industrial areas. 'It is a Commonwealth responsibility. We cannot shirk it. We cannot duck behind the smokescreen of State rights,' he concluded.⁵⁶

By 1969 a group of inner-city residents had formed the Carlton Association to push for better schooling in that inner-city suburb, particularly for migrant children. Their concerns were brought before the Senate by a Government member, Senator Ivor Greenwood (Lib. Vic.) who also suggested Commonwealth funding to remedy the problem.

The Government finally yielded to this pressure. It passed the *Immigration (Education) Act* on 12 March 1970 and announced on 23 April that it would fund the salaries of teachers in special language classes for migrant children, training for these teachers in English as a second language, the provision of language laboratories and educational materials. It earmarked \$1,735,486 in the 1970-71 Budget for child migrant education, part of a total budget allocation of \$16 million to fund migrant education over four years.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ CPD, HR, vol 61, pp. 2298-99, 24.10.1968 and p. 2576, 7.11.1968.

⁵⁶ CPD, HR, vol 65, p. 1004, 9.9.1969.

⁵⁷ CPD, S, vol 42, pp. 1072-73 and pp. 1077, 18.9.1969, vol 52, p. 615, 31.8.1972; *Auditor-General's Report, 1970-71*; Draft report of the Survey of

classes, and of those who attended 40% were not getting sufficient instruction.

The main problem was accommodation. Two-thirds of the schools surveyed were very poorly placed, only 29% of rooms used for English-language classes for migrant children were proper classrooms, the rest were held in converted corridors, store rooms, staff rooms, cloak rooms, under stairs and even a converted shower block.

The number of teachers was inadequate with 500 teachers provided for 16,000 migrant pupils in Victoria. The survey estimated that the 63 schools surveyed needed 400 additional teachers.

Although a 4-week training course in teaching English as a second language (ESL) was provided for teachers, it was not a prerequisite for employment as an ESL teacher. Only 65 teachers in the 63 schools surveyed had done the course and all thought it had not been long enough.

The teaching materials supplied were inadequate and were often inappropriate for children and the language laboratories were largely a useless gimmick. The provision to migrant parents of translated information and of adult interpreters was also found to be inadequate and consequently attendance by migrants at parents' meetings was poor.

The report was particularly sensitive for the Victorian government. Its several drafts reveal that a number of strongly-worded criticisms were watered down and the representative of the Victorian Education Department contested the report's findings, arguing that they were the result of the 'natural propensity' of teachers and principals 'to inflate the dimensions of the problem.' He attempted, unsuccessfully, to prevent its tabling before the State elections in May 1973. In his statement to Parliament on the Report on 5 April 1973, Kim Beasley acknowledged the need to reverse the 1970 decision of Cabinet not to grant Commonwealth assistance for accommodation in State schools. The budget allocation for 1973-74 for this program was increased by 100%.⁶⁴

Following the recommendations of a series of reports by the Immigration Advisory Council, the Commonwealth organised a seminar on the need to include instruction on special needs of non-English

⁶⁴ See various drafts of Survey of Child Migrant Education in Schools of High Migrant Density and Department of Immigration minutes 1972-73, 75/78905, CRS A446 T31, AA; CPD, HR, vol 87, p. 3510, 20.11.1973.

speaking children in all teacher-training courses in 1974. It also funded studies of the educational experience of such children and of ways of assessing their progress in English learning.⁶⁵

TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING 1950-75

The level of migrant English instruction considered adequate by the government, and the small proportion of the migrant population able to gain access to AMES services, made it inevitable that translating and interpreting facilities would be required. Cultural assumptions, however, prevented decision-makers from perceiving the social disadvantage and exclusion experienced by large numbers of migrants. The failure by both government and non-government bodies to provide information in languages comprehensible to non-English speaking migrants provided a major obstacle to their exercising their rights and accessing the services to which they were entitled as permanent residents.

The need for adequate interpreting and translating services was not understood until their absence had created situations which caused great personal tragedy for some migrants and considerable political embarrassment to the government. Administrators failed to appreciate the compliance costs to departments and instrumentalities at all levels of government of large numbers of migrants who were either unaware of laws and regulations or had no idea how to comply with them.

Monolingual bureaucrats not only failed to see the need for interpreters and translators for a very long time, they also did not appreciate the skills involved. This was reflected in the resistance to paying allowances to migrants employed in other work but used as interpreters, and in the low wages and unrealistic expectations of those employed primarily in this capacity.

Official attention was drawn to the urgency of the need for interpreters and translators by a generation mainstream community leaders with different cultural values from those who earlier advised the government on AMES policy. When they succeeded in drawing the attention of the Department of Immigration to the need, the response, in the form of an innovative telephone interpreter service, was imaginative and successful. The task then confronting the Department, and one with

⁶⁵ CPD, HR, vol 96, p. 1720.

which it made little headway with in this period, was to persuade other government and non-government bodies to provide their migrant clients with interpreters and information about their services in translation.

The Department of Immigration's interpreting services

From 1950, migrants employed in the Department of Immigration, to provide for its own interpreting needs, were increasingly called upon by other Federal and State bodies to help them relate to the migrant community. The Department was, therefore, forced to formulate policy to regulate their availability and payment.

In May 1950 the Chief Commissioner for Police in Victoria asked the Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt, to allow a Czechoslovakian clerk employed at the Williamstown Hostel to interpret for police when interviewing migrants in hostels. He also asked if similar arrangements could be made other parts of the State. Holt agreed, but pointed out that the proposed rate of 10/6 an hour was considerably less than the clerk's present remuneration.⁶⁶ The Secretary of the Department of Immigration, however, informed the Chief Secretary of Victoria that the terms of employment with the Commonwealth Public Service Board prevented the particular migrant nominated by the Chief Commissioner from being employed as an interpreter. Instead the Department arranged for the employment of a full-time interpreter on the staff of the Chief Migration Officer (CMO) in Melbourne, who would be paid at a rate appropriate to Commonwealth interpreters.⁶⁷

Not only were there insufficient interpreters available, the standard of interpreting was frequently inadequate. Untrained migrants were often called upon to interpret in highly specialised fields where accuracy was essential. The Victorian Attorney General complained to the Minister in June 1951 that the judges of the Supreme Court of Victoria were dissatisfied with the lack of proficiency of interpreters used in the Court, and asked for a list of reliable interpreters.⁶⁸ Heyes informed the Department of Labour and National Service that there was only one official interpreter in the Department's Melbourne office and that he had always been made available for Supreme Court work.

⁶⁶ Hon. H. W. Leggatt to Holt, 12.5.1950, reply 1.6.1950, 75/79151, CRS A446 T31, AA.

⁶⁷ Heyes to Hon. K. Dodgshun, 4.8.1950, 75/79151, CRS A446 T31, AA.

⁶⁸ T. W. Mitchell to Holt, 25.6.1951, 75/79151, CRS A446 T31, AA.

Heyes indicated that he might be able to supply other interpreters from among the Department's 'temporary New Australian staff'⁶⁹ (only Australian citizens could be permanent employees of the Public Service).

By October 1951 there were four migrants employed in the Melbourne office who between them 'covered the majority of European languages.' This, in the opinion of the CMO, would meet most of the requirements of Crown authorities in Victoria. The CMO had considered supplying to State authorities a typist with linguistic qualifications, but decided against it on the grounds that 'it would do little to satisfy their overall requirements as it is most difficult to obtain a girl with other than three or four major languages and, in addition, it is undesirable to use female interpreters in many Court actions.'⁷⁰

It was not until July 1951 that the Department formulated a policy on the use of Departmental interpreters by outside bodies. The Department would refuse requests to supply interpreters to Courts (except where the Crown was involved) and other public bodies, such as Municipal Councils, throughout Australia. Senior officers in Central Office, however, were authorised to make exception in the case of requests by local bodies such as courts in the ACT and Queanbeyan, the Commonwealth Police, and the Kenmore psychiatric hospital at Goulburn. The Department argued that the supply of interpreters to other bodies was outside the responsibility of a Commonwealth Department and that they should appoint an interpreter themselves through the Commonwealth Employment Service.⁷¹

Other Departments were relatively slow in recognising the importance of providing the interpreters, and information in translation needed to facilitate migrant compliance with Australian laws and regulations. In 1963 the Minister for Customs and Excise informed the Senate that while his Department employed its own multi-lingual staff as interpreters, and engaged outside interpreters when necessary, it had

⁶⁹ Heyes to the Acting Secretary, Department of Labour and National Service (DLNS), 31.7.1951, 75/79151, CRS A446 T31, AA.

⁷⁰ A.H. Prest to Secretary, 2.10.1951, 75/79151, CRS A446 T31, AA.

⁷¹ Minute, R.E. Armstrong, Assistant Secretary, Assimilation Division, to Secretary, 24.6. and 24.7.1951; Medical Superintendent, Kenmore to Welfare Officer, Department of Immigration, Canberra, 18.7.1951, reply by Secretary 24.7.1951, 75/79151, CRS A446 T31, AA.

only recently begun to consider having a number of its publications and forms translated into various languages.⁷²

Pressure for interpreting services

Although the Department of Immigration was responsible for coordinating English language teaching throughout Australia, it did not seek a similarly proactive role in the provision of interpreting and translating services. The ethnic press, however, was not silent on the need for adequate interpreters in the Australian community.

In September 1953 the journal *Magyar Ujsag* published an article by a former leading Hungarian jurist, S. Edvi-Illes LL.D. While he praised the impartiality of the Australian judiciary, Edvi-Illes argued that the inadequacies of official interpreters supplied by the Department of Immigration impeded the just application of the law in cases involving migrants. They were often unfamiliar with legal terminology and with the subtleties of the English language, he alleged. He suggested that the Crown Law Department conduct examinations for interpreters, or that migrants should be allowed to bring their own interpreters into Court.⁷³ While the Department had no scale of fees for interpreters, by the end of 1953 it had become normal practice to pay the rates applied by the Supreme Court in each State.⁷⁴

Pressure to establish an interpreting service for the community funded by the Department of Immigration came from within its own Social Welfare Section. In April 1963 the Senior Social Worker in the ACT, Stephanie Lindsay Thompson, rather cleverly turned one of the Department's own publications against it. A booklet entitled *Organisation and Functions of the Department of Immigration* published in February that year rather rashly claimed that:

Translations are undertaken by the Department in all cases where a direct migrant benefit exists — in all matters affecting immigration or integration ...

The centralised service adopted to arrange translations enables each State branch office to provide translations free of charge to migrants, government departments and such organisations as the Good Neighbour Movement and the Australian Red Cross Society.

⁷² Senator Henty, CPD, HR, vol 24, p. 900, 26.3.1963.

⁷³ Article dated 6.9.1953, included in 75/79151, A446 T31, AA.

⁷⁴ Heyes to CMO Melbourne, c.19.11.1953, 75/79151, A446 T31, AA.

Ms Lindsay Thompson expressed her surprise that, given the above statement, the Department did not make any provision for an interpreter service. She noted that the highly valued interpreting services provided by Departmental officers in the ACT had recently been curtailed, and social welfare services had subsequently suffered. 'Interpreters are indispensable to a migrant welfare service,' she asserted. In the ACT, she pointed out, the Department of the Interior had no interpreters and relied on those of the Department of Immigration. Volunteers from the Good Neighbour Council could only meet the needs of 25 of the 40 nationalities in the region, very few were well qualified, they were mostly unavailable during working hours, and frequently were either unable or unwilling to interpret correctly, she observed. She argued for the establishment of both an interpreting and translating service to assist her Section in the assimilation of aliens into the local community.⁷⁵

This lively communication was taken seriously in Central Office and other Sections were consulted. The officer who did most of the interpreting for the ACT region was asked to detail recent requests for his services. The Senior Social Worker in the Sydney office, when questioned, informed Central Office that during her visits to Wollongong she used Commonwealth Bank interpreters and conducted interviews in their offices. Outside interviews were carried out using friends or family as interpreters.

Although there was no interpreting service in Central Office, by 1964 the Australian community increasingly looked to the Department of Immigration in Canberra to meet its interpreting needs. In February that year the Australian Corriedale Association asked the Department for assistance in finding simultaneous English/Spanish interpreters with knowledge of sheep terminology for its forthcoming world conference. This matter involved various officers of the Department until June that year.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Minute, S. Lindsay Thompson to the Officer in Charge, Assimilation, 4.4.1963, 75/78908, A446 T31, AA.

⁷⁶ See correspondence dated 21.2, 28.4, 4.5 & 2.6.1964, 75/79151, A446 T31, AA.

The Department of Immigration's translation functions

From 1953 to 1957 the Department of Immigration had farmed out its domestic foreign language correspondence to migrant centres. This led to long delays and complaints about the quality of translations. Central Office took over this translating function in June 1957, and by December 1958 it had assumed the translating functions which had been performed for Commonwealth government departments and the Red Cross by the Commonwealth Investigation Service since 1947. Although policy defining the Department's translating role was adopted in November 1959, responsibility for the Department's foreign language translating functions was only transferred to the Citizenship Branch in 1963.

In 1964 the Department approached the Public Service Board for assistance in establishing a Departmental Translating and Interpreting Service. It sought the establishment of full-time positions of reviewer/translator/interpreter to do the work previously done by Departmental officers as 'extra duty'.⁷⁷

Departmental perceptions of need

In 1968 the Department instructed the State Directors of Migration to review interpreting and translating services in their regions. NSW reported that there was no official establishment of interpreters in the Commonwealth Hostels, but as most staff were Europeans they were usually called upon to fulfil that function. In the absence of an appropriate interpreter the Hostels relied on the Commonwealth Bank which, by 1968, provided migrant information and interpreting services in the cities of Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle and Fairfield, had bi-lingual staff in areas of high migrant concentration, and offered a free translating service at any of its branches in NSW. The ANZ Bank in Sydney also had a small migrant service and provided interpreting and translating in most major

⁷⁷ K. Kern, Assistant Secretary, Administration to the Assistant Secretary, Citizenship Division, 5.4.1963; A. Poberay to S. R. Lewis 24.6.1963; S. R. Lewis, note of conversation with Ms Ferguson, Sydney, 23.7.1963; P. R. Heydon, Secretary, Department of Immigration to Secretary, Public Service Board, n.d. (c.7.2.1964); J. Moylan to Mr Purcell, comment on proposed submission, 7.2.1964, 75/78908, A446 T31, AA

European languages and Arabic.⁷⁸ The Commonwealth Director of Migration in Sydney informed the Department in May 1968 that he proposed to seek approval from the Public Service Inspector to establish an interpreting and translating service in his office, as he opposed both the use of his staff for this purpose and reliance on the Banks or other outsiders to perform 'our duties.'⁷⁹

The Department's attention was drawn to the problem of the lack of interpreting and translating for small language groups by the Finnish Ambassador in 1969, in the context of a proposed migration agreement between Australia and Finland. The Ambassador's concerns prompted the Department to ask all State and Territory Branches what they believed their interpreting needs to be.⁸⁰

Although the Secretary himself believed that the Department should have in each of its offices in the State capitals at least one person capable of translating the language of each of the countries from which migrants came in any substantial numbers,⁸¹ the replies to the Australia-wide inquiry revealed that in most regions (except in NSW and the Northern Territory) there was little appreciation of migrants' needs for interpreting and translating services.

Neither Tasmania, Western Australia nor South Australia believed they needed a full-time interpreter, and Queensland supported its argument that it did not need a translator with statistics showing the small numbers of translations it had been asked to provide. It admitted, however, that most migrants were aware that the office did not provide translations, and used the Migrant Advisory Services of the banks. The Commonwealth Director of Migration in Brisbane saw only periodic need for an interpreter when large numbers of migrants arrived, and believed that this need 'could be best covered by approval to employ an interpreter for a limited period to assist in the initial settlement of the group and in associated problems which may arise.' Victoria focussed entirely on the question of remuneration for its staff engaged in extra

⁷⁸ Minute, W. Cawood, Integration and Education Section to C.H. Smith, Citizenship Branch, 16.2.1968, 75/78908, A446 T31, AA.

⁷⁹ G.E. Hitchins to Secretary, 27.5.1968, 75/78908, A446 T31, AA.

⁸⁰ Notes on Finland and Finnish migration to Australia, April 1969; Minute, P.R. Heydon, Secretary, on discussions with Finnish Ambassador, 11.4.1969, L.A. Taylor, Acting Director, Establishment Section to Commonwealth Directors of Migration in all States, 23.4.1969, 75/78908, A446 T31, AA.

⁸¹ Minute, P.R. Heydon, Secretary, on discussions with Finnish Ambassador, 11.4.1969, 75/78908, A446 T31, AA.

interpreting and translating duties.⁸² No State saw a need for interpreters fluent in Finnish.

Community pressure for interpreters

This general complacency evident within most State Branches of the Department of Immigration about the adequacy of existing interpreting and translating services to meet the needs of the migrant community, was soon eroded by community groups concerned about the failure of government departments to deliver their services to migrants, particularly in the areas of health and education. This push came not from ethnic but from mainstream community organisations.

The Senior Social Worker in Sydney warned the Department in May 1968 of the concerns about inadequate interpreting and translating facilities expressed by several committees of which she was a member. These were the Good Neighbour Council, the Welfare Planning Committee, the Mental Health of Migrants Committee (a standing committee of the Association for Mental Health) and the Migrant Care Committee, chaired by Dr Yeomans of the New South Wales Health Department.

Questionnaires sent out to doctors in hospitals and private practices by the Good Neighbour Council, and a survey of interpreting needs in 28 public hospitals in Sydney conducted by the Mental Health of Migrants Committee, revealed that complacency was widespread. The NSW Department of Health replied that while it recognised the difficulties it considered neither the appointment of interpreters nor the training of staff to be justified. Although that Department was preparing a list of NSW psychiatrists with one or more languages, zoning arrangements prevented them from being consulted by patients outside their catchment area.⁸³

Powerful health administrators had begun mobilising their forces. In December 1967 Mr Justice Rae Else-Mitchell, President of the Association for Mental Health, had written to the NSW Minister for Health, F. H. Jago, conveying that organisation's resolution on the need for the appointment of professional interpreters in public hospitals. The Minister informed him that most used their own bi-lingual

⁸² State responses are in 75/78908, A446 T31, AA.

⁸³ F. Ferguson to the Senior Migration Officer, Citizenship Branch, 3.5.1968, 75/78908, CRS A446 T31, AA.

administrative or domestic staff as interpreters, or engaged voluntary or commercial interpreters. Since 1958 public hospitals had relied on a booklet, *Foreign Language Phrases*, produced by the Victorian Red Cross. 'Whilst I agree that there may be some difficulties between migrants and the staff of hospitals,' the Minister conceded, 'I do not consider that the appointment of professional interpreters is justified at this stage.' He included an undated list of languages spoken by the 'medical staff' in NSW mental hospitals (which did not indicate at what capacity the staff was employed).⁸⁴

The Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Monash University, Dr Carl Wood, joined the fray in February 1968 with a letter to the Minister for Immigration, B.M. Snedden. The Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital in Melbourne delivered several thousand Greek and Italian patients of babies each year and, he pointed out, the majority of mothers could not speak English. The hospital needed interpreters so that these patients can be adequately cared for during labour. 'Many of these patients are extremely frightened or frankly terrified during childbirth and the small hospital resources for providing paid interpreters is always over-strained,' he argued. He suggested that the Government give recognition and financial support to migrant groups so that they would be able to assist in solving that problem. The Italian Assistance Committee already provided some interpreters to hospitals but its service was limited by lack of support.⁸⁵

In March 1969 Senator Mulverhill (ALP NSW) drew attention of Parliament to the need for interpreters in baby health centres near migrant hostels to enable migrant mothers to care properly for the health of their children. He tabled a letter from the NSW Minister for Health, F.H. Jago, (which he later described as 'evasive') that listed hostels in his State that had baby health centres, and described the various limited arrangements made to provide interpreting for migrant mothers. Mulverhill, who had visited two of the hostels, urged the appointment of qualified interpreters.

He also highlighted the lack of value placed on the skills on interpreters in the bureaucracy, quoting a recent advertisement for an interpreter at Sydney Airport which offered \$56 a week for an

⁸⁴ F.H. Jago, Minister for Health, to Mr Justice R. Else-Mitchell, 8.1.1968, 75/78869, CRS A446, AA.

⁸⁵ Carl Wood, to B.M. Snedden, 20.2.1968, 75/78869, CRS A446, AA.

interpreter to work on call with customs, health and immigration officers. The applicant was required to be fluent in Italian, Spanish, French, German and Dutch and have a knowledge of Russian, Polish, Yugoslav and Asian languages. 'A person would have to be a pretty hot shot to be reasonably conversant with all the languages mentioned', the Senator remarked laconically. 'There is a lack of communication and not enough interpreters,' he stated, expressing his mystification at the continued priority placed on the teaching of French when there were so few French migrants in Australia. He urged the employment of more multi-lingual post-war migrants as interpreters instead of resorting to ad hoc use of untrained migrants working in other capacities.⁸⁶

The concern of the peak welfare body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) about migrant welfare was made manifest by its formation of a Joint Committee on Migrant Welfare in conjunction with the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) on 7 May 1968. This Committee comprised representatives of 15 mainstream welfare organisations, (most of which were also affiliated with the Good Neighbour Movement), but no ethnic groups.⁸⁷

During its first year of operation the Committee prepared a report for the Commonwealth Committee of Enquiry into Health Insurance on the problems migrants experienced in obtaining health insurance, held a seminar in Victoria on migrant access to community welfare services, and supplied information on migrant living conditions to the study on poverty headed by Professor Ronald Henderson of Melbourne University's Institute of Applied Economic Research. Its submission on interpreting needs for the Department of Immigration's survey recommended the establishment of a national school for interpreters offering a two to three year course for professionals, a one year course in Colleges of Advanced Education to solve the more

⁸⁶ CPD, S, vol 40, p. 267, 4.3.1969 & p. 436, 16.3.1969, pp. 436-37 & pp. 1064-69, 18.3.1969; vol 54, p. 2065, 16.10.1972. & vol 55, p. 295, 8.3.1973.

⁸⁷ The organisations represented by ACOSS in 1969 were the Australian Association of Social Workers, Australian Council of Churches, Australian Psychological Association, Catholic Immigration Committee, European/Australian Christian Fellowship, Federation of Australian Jewish Welfare Societies, Federal Inter-Church Migrant Committee, Methodist Church of Australia, International Social Service, Lutheran World Federation, National Youth Council of Australia, Salvation Army, United Nations Association of Australia, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, Report of the ACOSS/ACFOA Joint Committee on Migrant Welfare, May 1969; 75/79169, CRS A446 T31, AA, Terms of reference of ACOSS/ACFOA Joint Migrant Welfare Committee, Report 20.6.1972, 75/79738, A446 T31, AA.

immediate and pressing needs, and the initiation of a comprehensive program of community education to emphasise the need for skilled interpreters.⁸⁸

In May 1970 ACOSS sponsored a conference on psychiatric illness in migrants attended by psychiatrists, physicians and social workers representing a wide range of government, university and voluntary agencies. Its findings also indicated an acute lack of suitably skilled interpreters in mental hospitals. It declared the use of hospital attendants and cleaners by psychiatrists when interviewing and treating migrants 'quite unsuitable' and not infrequently leading to wrongful diagnosis.

The Chairman of the ACOSS/ACFOA Joint Committee on the Welfare of Migrants, Walter Lippmann, commented at its 34th Council Meeting in August 1970 that government departments had 'only recently become more aware of' the specific interpreting problems of migrants in relation to health, pre-school and school education.⁸⁹ The Committee expressed its concern at the lack of interpreting services. Its invitation to the Department of Immigration to send a representative to Committee meetings as an observer was accepted.⁹⁰

The issue of adequate interpreting was also discussed at the 1970 Citizenship Convention where H. Souter of the Immigration Planning Council, suggested that a register of people with linguistic skills be made available to hospitals, doctors and lawyers and at police stations, in the same way as lists of Justices of the Peace were available. Walter Lippmann, also a member of this Council, stressed the need for skilled interpreters to assist migrants in medical and social counselling and particularly at police stations and in lower courts.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Report on interpreters by sub-committee of ACOSS/ACFOA joint migrant welfare committee, n.d., 75/79156, CRS A446 T31, AA.

⁸⁹ Agenda Item for Commonwealth/State Conference of Ministers for Immigration, 24.9.1970, 75/78908, CRS A446 T31, AA; Minutes of 34th ACOSS Council Meeting, 6.8.1970, 75/79169, CRS A446 T31, AA.

⁹⁰ ACOSS Council Meeting 6/7.8.1970; G. C. Watson, First Assistant Secretary to Mr Charles, 14.8.1971, 75/79168, CRS A446 T31, AA

⁹¹ IAC, draft chairman's notes, 'Migrant Integration- Interpreters in Hospitals', 23.11.1970, 75/78908, CRS A446 T31, AA.

Departmental responses to community pressure

This pressure was beginning to have results. The issue of interpreters in hospitals was raised at the conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers for Immigration on 12 February 1969. In 1970 the Department of Immigration conducted its own survey of migrant patients in Government Psychiatric Centres in Sydney and found that inability to communicate was a major factor leading to psychiatric breakdown and impeding subsequent recovery. One third of all non-British patients spoke little or no English and only half of the Greek, Italian and Yugoslav patients spoke English. The report's recommendation that a survey be undertaken of interpreting needs not only in psychiatric hospitals but in the community generally, was communicated by the Department of Immigration to the meeting of the Commonwealth State Immigration Ministers in October 1970.⁹²

On 25 February and 30 October 1970 the Department of Immigration put proposals before the Public Service Board for the creation of three positions in both its Sydney and Melbourne offices for interpreters. They would form the nucleus of an interpreter service for both routine Departmental matters and for emergencies, such as in hospitals, psychiatric centres and police courts. It also requested allowances for its staff employed as casual interpreters. It was considering extending this service to other States 'where the need is seen to exist'.

On 23 November 1970 two Clerk Class 1 positions were approved for interpreters in Melbourne, but the question of allowances for existing staff engaged in interpreting was still unresolved. The Public Service Board did not think such payments were appropriate. Although the Queen Victoria Hospital in Melbourne now employed interpreters, there were still no Commonwealth or State policies on the provision of free interpreting services for migrants needing to gain access to medical or legal facilities. Nor did employers of large numbers of migrants see the need to provide interpreters for their staff. There was an obvious

⁹² Paper, 'Interpreters in Hospital', 24.9.1970 and P.R. Heydon, Secretary Department of Immigration to Minister, 10.3.1971, 75/78908, CRS A446 T31, AA.

need to delineate State/Commonwealth responsibilities to fund adequate interpreting facilities.⁹³

In March 1971 the Secretary raised with the Minister the need for a system in Australia whereby professional interpreters could gain accreditation. He urged the Commonwealth to take the lead by creating the classification of interpreter within the Commonwealth Public Service.

That month the Minister was able to report to Parliament that it had an establishment of ten translators in Central Office (as well as other clerks with linguistic skills who could be used when needed) to meet its own demands and those of other Commonwealth departments, and of certain community agencies such as the Red Cross. There was also one interpreter in Canberra to meet the requirements of the ACT. State offices had 106 clerks with linguistic skills who could be called on when required as translators and interpreters. He referred to the current applications before the Public Service Board to create positions for interpreters in NSW and Victoria, and announced his intention to provide an interpreter unit to meet not only Departmental needs but also emergency situations arising in the community. He added that he expected the community to develop its own interpreter services and that the proposed Departmental survey was expected to assist in identifying areas of greatest need.⁹⁴

Although the need for adequate and skilled interpreting services was firmly on the agenda by 1971, the Government had introduced no practical initiative to demonstrate that it was doing anything constructive. Despite this, it continued to present the situation in a favourable light. When asked by Senator Willesee (ALP, WA) in October 1972 whether the Minister for Immigration would give urgent consideration to providing interpreters in major public hospitals, the Minister representing the Minister for Immigration, Senator Greenwood, continued to stress that it was not solely a Commonwealth responsibility and commented that 'it is significant to note the extent to which commerce and industry is already active in this regard.' He also

⁹³ Chairman's Notes, Migrant Integration - Interpreters in Hospitals, 23.11.1970, A/g Assistant Secretary, S. J. Rooth to Mr Rice 22.12.1970, N. J. Attwood A/g Commonwealth Public Service Inspector to Department of Immigration 23.1.1970, J. J. Smith, Commonwealth Director of Migration for Victoria to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 2.12.1970, 75/78908, CRS A446 T31, AA.

⁹⁴ P.R. Heydon, Secretary Department of Immigration to Minister, 10.3.1971, Parliamentary Question 9.3.1971, 75/78908, CRS A446 T31, AA.

satisfied at all that justice is being done at the present time or that it has been done in the past', he concluded.⁹⁹

Release of the Department's report on interpreting and translating needs.

Research for the Department's *Report on the Survey of Interpreting and Translating needs in the Community*, was conducted between 1971-72 under a Liberal Ministry. Its findings were so embarrassing to the Government that in 1972 its distribution was restricted to academics with a special interest in the field, and to State governments and Commonwealth departments providing personal services to the Community. It was not so embarrassing to a Labor Government and it was published in full in October 1973, on the recommendation of the Immigration Advisory Council, which believed that it should be more widely available to community organisations and other agencies involved in interpreting activities.¹⁰⁰

This study, based on responses to 2,515 questionnaires sent to 34 different types of organisations in areas with a high migrant population, revealed the extent to which social justice had been denied to migrants by inadequate language services. It showed that many migrants were unable to gain access to many essential services to which they were entitled, or to comply with laws and regulations to which they were subject in everyday life.

Significant numbers of organisations working in the areas of employment, accommodation, welfare, health education, law, finance and insurance, local government and transport, reported occasions on which non-English speakers could not be assisted because no interpreter was available. Despite the focus of many of the recent enquiries on migrants' inability to access medical services, migrants' greatest problems were found to lie in access to educational guidance services. The second most difficult area to access was that providing welfare services. Most organisations had problems arranging for interpreters, but those providing employment and accommodation services were most handicapped by lack of interpreters. Each major group believed

⁹⁹ CPD, HR, vol 85, p. 1417, 25.9.1973.

¹⁰⁰ Information on the selective release of this report is from the Secretary's note to Minister on interpreter services, 26.9.1973, p. 2, 75/79156, CRS A446 T31, AA; Agenda of IAC meeting 16.7.1973, 75/79156, CRS A446 T31, AA.

that accuracy and precision of interpreting was vital, but this was seen to be most important in the legal and law enforcement areas.

The report found that significant numbers of migrants were unable to explain their educational and trade qualifications or work histories when they went to the Commonwealth Employment Service, or to their employers when they found work. At work they remained ignorant of company and union policy, safety regulations and provisions for compensation. They had difficulty talking to real estate agents or government housing authorities when they were looking for accommodation, and with government and voluntary welfare agencies when in need of counselling. They had problems communicating with medical practitioners, lawyers, staff in public hospitals, banks, insurance companies, baby health centres, nursing homes, psychiatric centres, and in gaining access to medical and hospital benefits. All psychiatric centres, over 81% of hospitals and 62% of medical practitioners had had difficulty arranging for interpreters in some languages. Of the schools consulted 74.6% reported problems communicating with migrant parents whose need for information was not being adequately met.

Lack of interpreters also disadvantaged the State by increasing the cost of achieving and monitoring compliance with laws and regulations. The police, for example, could not adequately monitor compliance with various licensing requirements. The Department of Customs and Excise, without adequate numbers of interpreters, was obliged to check all the household and personal effects of incoming migrants. This demanded additional staff and caused lengthy delays in clearing passengers. Local governments had difficulties collecting rates, making health and building inspections, conducting immunization programs, infectious diseases investigations and in enforcing their regulations.

If the survey revealed the inadequacy of most Department of Immigration Regional Directors' appreciation of the need for interpreters in their States, it revealed an even greater lack of awareness of interpreting needs in the general community. Not one of the organisations contacted had either full-time interpreters, or staff who could be drawn on as interpreters. All relied on migrants to supply their own interpreters, who were sometimes children, usually untrained, and often inadequate. Reliance on such interpreters was often embarrassing and sometimes compromised confidentiality.

Migrants had to have their documents translated through banks, consulates or other sources.¹⁰¹

Towards constructive solutions — professional status

The Department of Immigration's survey was so thorough and its findings so appalling that in October 1972 the Immigration Advisory Council (IAC) appointed a sub-committee to study it, to consider matters arising from it and to make recommendations to the Council on them. The IAC, established in 1947 to advise the Minister for Immigration, comprised representatives of major employer and trade union bodies as well as mainstream community organisations representing ex-service and women's groups.

The sub-committee, which first met on 26 January 1973, agreed that the Department of Immigration should not be responsible for meeting all migrant communication needs but that the onus for providing language services lay with the community at large, including State and Local governments and statutory authorities, as well as commerce and industry generally. It emphasised that interpreter services should be seen as part of normal community services, with the cost being borne by the user, except in cases of hardship.

At its second meeting on 19 March 1973 the IAC discussed various option papers, and agreed that Government and non-Government agencies and major employers be encouraged to establish skilled interpreter services appropriate to their needs and financed from their own resources. It also advised that educationalists be consulted to develop a two-tiered training structure — short courses for generalist interpreters and 12 month courses for persons already competent in languages. It recommended the establishment of a national committee or board to set standards, approve qualifications, act as a registration authority and to recommend salary levels appropriate to the status accorded to graduates.

The Department of Immigration was given the task of investigating details of interpreting courses overseas, and the IAC was to review present classifications of interpreters employed in the

¹⁰¹ *Report on the Survey of Interpreting and Translating Needs in the Community*, October 1973, pp. 1-110.

Commonwealth Public Service, which, it believed, should set the standard for other employers in recognising the value and status of interpreters. The IAC saw its task as the initiation of a comprehensive program to educate the community to recognise situations in which interpreters should be used, to accept the responsibility to provide interpreter services, and to appreciate the need for interpreters to be professionally qualified.¹⁰²

On the recommendation of the IAC, the Minister for Immigration raised the question of interpreter services in State Government administration and health and legal institutions with State Ministers for Immigration in May 1973. The Department argued that the provision of adequate interpreting must be seen as a normal service provided as part of community communication, and that State and local governments must each play its part. It also sought to stimulate community interest in the importance of interpreters.¹⁰³

Although the IAC agreed with the Department that adequate interpreting facilities lay with the community, it observed at its third meeting in July 1973 that the Government was in the best position to provide a lead, and urged the Department of Immigration to coordinate action to provide interpreters throughout the community.¹⁰⁴

In August 1973, ACOSS chaired a meeting in Canberra of representatives of various government bodies and educational institutions on the need for a national interpreters' school. It argued that the findings of both its own 1968-70 enquiry into interpreter needs, and that of the Department of Immigration, demonstrated the grave shortage of skilled interpreters not only in welfare agencies but also in a wide range of essential services.

This meeting established a working party to make a detailed examination of the need for a national school for interpreters. ACOSS was seen as the most appropriate body to lead such an inquiry because of its wide community base and because it was seen by the government

¹⁰² Minutes of Meeting 26.1 & 19.3.1973; Report on interpreters by sub-committee of ACOSS/ACFOA joint migrant welfare committee, n.d. 75/79156, CRS A446 T31, AA.

¹⁰³ Note on interpreter services, 26.9.1973, 75/79156, CRS A446 T31, AA.

¹⁰⁴ Agenda of IAC meetings 19.3.1973 and 16.7.1973, 75/79156, CRS A446 T31, AA.

departments involved as being 'more neutral'.¹⁰⁵ ACOSS released its own *Report on Interpreter Facilities* in September 1973. In its annual report for 1972/73 it stressed the 'severe shortage of interpreters' and recommended the establishment of interpreter schools at State and national level.¹⁰⁶

As the over 120 bi-lingual officers employed in the Central and State offices of the Department of Immigration were still heavily involved in translating material for a wide range of Commonwealth Departments and approved outside agencies, the Department was pleased at what it perceived to be a community response to a pressing migrant need for professionally trained interpreters, rather than one which looked to the Department to solve the problem.¹⁰⁷

The Department itself was also taking initiatives to involve other departments in migrant settlement issues. In July 1973, G.C. Watson, First Assistant Secretary, had pointed out to the Acting Secretary H. McGinness that the National Commission on Social Welfare (NCSW), which Cabinet had established in April under the chairmanship of Marie Coleman, had appointed no one to its working party on manpower who was qualified to speak on the social welfare of migrants.

The Department offered to assist the Commission and in his subsequent meeting with Ms Coleman the Secretary emphasised that the Department had been 'going through a learning process and we were still developing new initiatives.' He referred to the Migrant English program as the area of major effort. He stressed, however, that the Department saw its main role in the initial settlement phase and believed that migrants would then be able to gain access to normal community resources. This point was reinforced at the Ministerial level in a communication between Grassby and Hayden. The following month the Department learnt at a meeting of the NCSW that the Department of Social Services hoped to develop its own interpreter service and was

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of Meeting 1.8.1973, 75/79156, CRS A446 T31, AA; Report of ACOSS/ACFOA Migrant Welfare Committee Subcommittee on Interpreter Facilities, September 1972, 75/79738, A446 T31, AA.

¹⁰⁶ Extracts from ACOSS Annual Report 1972/73, 75/79291, CRS A446 T31, AA.

¹⁰⁷ Secretary, R.E. Armstrong, to Minister, A.J. Grassby, 26.9.1973, attached statistics showed that from July to September the Department had translated a total of 1336 items for 28 government departments which dealt with the public and 21 departments which did not, attached notes for the Minister on interpreter services, 75/79156, CRS A446 T31, AA.

being assisted by the Department of Immigration's Sydney and Melbourne offices through the Emergency Telephone Interpreter Service.¹⁰⁸

Following the tabling in Parliament of the Department of Immigration's survey on interpreting and translating on 30 October 1973, on the recommendation of the November Conference of Ministers for Immigration Grassby approached Dr D. M. Myers, Chairman of the Committee on Overseas Qualifications (COPQ). He suggested that, although it was not within COPQ's terms of reference, that body was admirably suited to establish professional standards for interpreters and translators and to help them obtain recognition as a professional group. Grassby indicated that efforts by ACOSS and some universities and colleges to solve the interpreting problem had been 'unco-ordinated'. He outlined his Department's aims of establishing carefully defined standards for interpreters, a regulatory body to maintain a professional level of services, an association of professional interpreters, and sufficiently attractive terms and conditions of employment for interpreters. COPQ agreed to become involved in a working party with other interested groups to establish an accreditation structure for interpreters.¹⁰⁹

In November 1973, Grassby announced in Parliament that discussions were taking place to establish proper professional standards for interpreters and translators, and to set up a body that would police those standards and determine appropriate levels of pay and conditions for them. He hoped that a national school for interpreters would be established in Canberra.¹¹⁰

While Grassby's national school never eventuated, in 1975 three tertiary institutions, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, the Canberra College of Advanced Education and the University of New South Wales, introduced courses for interpreters, financed initially by

¹⁰⁸ Minute, G.C. Watson to H. McGinness, 4.7.1973; H. McGinness to Marie Coleman, 5.7.1973; File note, G.C. Watson of Secretary's meeting with Marie Coleman 11.8.1973; A.J. Grassby to W. Hayden, 31.8.1973, P.M. Rice to G. Kiddle, 9.8.1973, 75/79167, CRS A446 T31, AA.

¹⁰⁹ Grassby to Meyers, 26.11.1973, 75/78598, CRS A446 T31 AA; Minute of IAC meeting 22.11.1973, 75/79153, CRS A446 T31, AA; Ian G. Sharp, Secretary Department of Labour and Immigration, to the Administrator, Royal Adelaide Hospital, 4.10.1974, 75/78598, CRS A446 T31, AA; P.N. Shaw, to Mr Watson, Synopsis of consultation conducted by the Committee on Interpreter Needs, Sydney 22.11.1873, 75/79153, CRS A446 T31, AA.

¹¹⁰ CPD, HR, vol 86, p. 2981, 8.11.1973.

the Department of Labour and Immigration. The Department asked the State Ministers for Immigration and the Australian Minister for Health to encourage suitable personnel to apply for admission to these courses.¹¹¹

— support from the Judiciary

Perhaps the greatest breakthrough in the quest to have migrants informed of their rights and privileges as Australian workers was, in the opinion of the Minister for Immigration in October 1973, the insistence by Mr Justice Moore, President of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, to make his decision in a recent compensation case available in the languages of the migrant workers involved in the dispute.

Grassby added that a recent study revealed that industrial accidents were highest among recently arrived migrants and that safety advice was not displayed in factories in languages comprehensible to the migrants employed there. Once injured, migrants were unaware of their compensation rights because this information was also unavailable in translation. Grassby undertook to ensure that the example set by Mr Justice Moore was followed in all State and Commonwealth arbitration tribunals, and that non-English speaking migrants were made aware of their rights and responsibilities under industrial awards.¹¹²

In the second year of his Ministry, Grassby, looking for evidence of increased migrant compliance with the expectation that they would settle and become Australians, noted with satisfaction in March 1974 that applications for citizenship had increased by 20% and that departures were declining.¹¹³

Grassby ceased to be Minister for Immigration on losing his seat in the June 1974 Federal Elections. During his time as Minister he had, in response to strong lobbying by ethnic organisations, supervised the removal of the old limitation, imposed by the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, on foreign-language broadcasts by commercial radio and television stations. Until January 1974 they had to restrict foreign-language broadcasts to no more than 2.5% of total

¹¹¹ Clyde R. Cameron to Senator J.A. Mulverhill, 20.12.1974, 75/78598, CRS A446 T31, AA.

¹¹² CPD, HR, vol 86, p. 2576-77, 24.10.1973.

¹¹³ CPD, HR, vol 88, p. 511, 14.3.1974.

broadcasting time. In his new role as Government adviser on ethnic affairs he participated in an interdepartmental committee to investigate the establishment of ethnic community broadcasting in Australia.¹¹⁴

— the devolution of language services 1974-5

From 12 June 1974 the Department of Immigration was re-named the Department of Labour and Immigration (DLI), and many of its settlement functions were allocated to other departments. Part of a devolutionary process which had begun in 1968, this was the result of the Government's recognition that responsibility for the delivery of services to migrants, as to other Australians, lay with all Departments. Devolution prompted protests from some ethnic organisations, and not without cause.¹¹⁵

The transfer of the Migrant Services Section to the Department of Social Security (DSS) in February 1975, found it ill prepared for such responsibility. The Section suffered from lack of clerical and administrative support and had no permanent full-time interpreting and translating staff.¹¹⁶ The Telephone Interpreting Service, which had drawn heavily on the linguistic skills of the Department of Immigration's Translating Unit (which remained with that Department), was transferred to DSS. That Department immediately surveyed its staff in regional and district offices, as well as State headquarters, to discover what linguistic skills it could draw on. Some State Directors insisted that Departmental staff used as interpreters should be adequately trained and remunerated.¹¹⁷

The DSS was warned in April 1975 that 'the identification of the Department of Immigration with Social Security has evoked suspicion

114 Ministerial Press Release, 28.1.1974; CPD, S, vol 63, p. 1194, 22.4.1975 & CPD, HR, vol 197, pp. 1860-61, 8.10.1975.

115 In January 1968 responsibility for the migrant flats schemes was given the the Department of Housing, in June 1974 the Department of Education took over migrant education and responsibilities under the *Immigration (Education) Act 1971*, the Department of Social Security became responsible for post-arrival arrangements other than education and the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946*, the Department of Housing and Construction became responsible for migrant accommodation. DLI News Release, 7.7.1974.

116 Minute by T.P. Graham, 'Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration', 13.6.1975, 75/78609 CRS A446 T31, AA.

117 Circular D.R. Scott, Assistant Director General, Department of Social Security, to Branch Assistant Directors General, 7.5.1975, responses from Adelaide, 3.7.1975 and Hobart 12.6.1975, 75/78616, CRS A446 T31, AA.

and hostility in some migrants,' and that it was important to persuade migrants of its will and capability to assume responsibility for their needs 'against a past history of benign neglect.' The need to provide training to sensitize counter staff, social workers and administrators to the cultural and linguistic differences of migrants, and to translate information and pamphlets into the major language groups, was stressed. A conference of senior Assistant Directors, officers in charge of Migrant Service Sections and senior social workers from all States was held in May 1975 to achieve these ends. This Conference decided to undertake a comprehensive reappraisal of the Good Neighbour Movement and noted that while considerable emphasis was placed on the role ethnic organisations could play in introducing recently arrived migrants into the community, many were not geared to this purpose.¹¹⁸

Interpreting and translating problems 1974-75

Despite devolution, and the emphasis on the responsibility of government instrumentalities to provide their own interpreters, the position in 1974 was still unsatisfactory. The Ethnic Communities and Migrant Issues Committee of the Council of Social Services (NSW) was concerned that the lack of clear guide-lines for DSS staff might prevent TIS from helping migrants gain access to community resources.¹¹⁹

The Administrator of the Royal Adelaide Hospital informed the South Australian Regional Director of the Department of Labor and Immigration, that the interpreting needs of many of the Hospital's patients were unmet; nurses, domestics and orderlies were being used as interpreters, and there was a lack of appreciation among all staff of the need for interpreters. Aborigines as well as migrants shared this need. There was no translating service within the hospital and no funds to pay for outside assistance. The Telephone Interpreter Service was not established in Adelaide until December 1975.¹²⁰

118 A. D. Taylor, to Director General DSS, 9.4.1975, Report of Migrant Social Welfare Conference, 23-24.6.1975, 75/79627, CRS A446 T31, AA.

119 Berenice Buckley, Chairman, Ethnic Communities and Migrant Issues Committee, Council of Social Services, NSW to Senator J. Wheeldon, Minister for Social Security, 26.8.1975, 75/78616, CRS A446 T31, AA.

120 R.L. Hooper, Administrator, Royal Adelaide Hospital to Regional Director, Department of Labor and Immigration, South Australia, 16.8.1974, 75/78598, CRS A446 T31, AA.

The situation in NSW varied. Although Crown Street Women's Hospital in Sydney had requested trained interpreters, it had been refused, and by November 1974 it was still using untrained cleaners, nurses and clerical staff as interpreters.¹²¹ The NSW Education Department by 1975 provided interpreters for migrants enrolling their children, and the NSW Police had its own interpreters supported by the NSW Court Interpreting Service.¹²² Very few ethnic organisations could meet the interpreting and translating needs of their own communities and they looked to the State to provide such services. TIS was often overloaded as inadequate remuneration made it difficult to get experienced interpreters.

The danger to public health created by failure to provide information on health regulations in translation to migrants was clearly perceived by at least one Melbourne doctor. A general practitioner in the inner Melbourne suburb of Coburg observed that none of the newly-arrived Turkish parents in his area had complied with the requirement that they have their children immunised against polio, diphtheria or whooping cough. He wrote to *The Medical Journal of Australia* expressing his fears that such non-compliance might lead to an epidemic of these diseases. In response, the Victorian Minister for Health denied that there was a problem, arguing that 87% of children in migrant hostels had been immunised and that leaflets in ten languages, including Turkish, were being distributed at infant welfare centres. Dr Grimblat pointed out that Turks did not live in hostels and did not take their children to health centres. The Department of Immigration reacted by translating its pamphlet 'We're Safe, We've been Immunised' into Greek, Serbo-Croat, Italian, German, Arabic and Turkish, but the problem of its distribution to its target readership remained.¹²³

By 1975 both government and non-government bodies were acknowledging the need to inform migrants of their social rights and to provide this information in translation. The Australian Government Information Service produced 'Newcomer and the Law' in eight major migrant languages and distributed it widely through the DSS, DLI, Good Neighbour Councils, Migrant Hostels, ethnic clubs, bank migrant

¹²¹ SMH, 13.11.1974.

¹²² R. Dowell, Director DSS Migrant Services Sydney, to Director General, DSS, 6.10.1975, 75/78616, CRS A446 T31, AA.

¹²³ Minute, J.R. Blackie, Regional Director, Melbourne, 28.2.1974, *Medical Journal of Australia*, 25.2.1974, 77/76561, A446/51, AA.

information services, Legal Aid offices, State branches of the Federal Attorney General's Department and State police headquarters. The Victorian Council for Civil Liberties also produced a pamphlet entitled 'Your Rights' which was translated into six major migrant languages.¹²⁴

The first main report of the Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, released in April 1975, saw poverty as inseparable from inequalities firmly entrenched in Australia's social structures. It found that 12.3% of non-English speaking migrants who had arrived in Australia since 1966 were below the poverty line in Australia. This was double the rate of disadvantage in the rest of the community, and would be twice as bad if migrant wives did not work. It criticised the provision of language classes, pointing out that only 40% of non-English speaking family heads attended post-arrival English classes, and urged the provision of interpreters and information in translation.

While the DSS now produced some of its basic information in 15 languages, it pointed out, no State health or welfare department provided information in translation. While acknowledging the responsibility of providing information in translation lay with all government departments, it criticised the Department of Labor and Immigration for not taking more initiative to encourage this. It urged greater utilisation of ethnic groups to provide post-arrival services to migrants, pointing out that of the 32 organisations receiving subsidies to provide social workers for migrants, only 3 of the 2,000 ethnic organisations identified by the Department of Labor and Immigration were in receipt of such grants.¹²⁵

The long-term effects of inadequate language services to migrants, were frankly outlined in another of the Commission's reports, *Migrants and the Legal System*, in 1975. It drew attention not only to the social injustice and poverty caused by systemic obstacles to migrants in gaining access to legal and political systems, but the cost to Australia in the form of migrants abandoning their initial intention to settle. From

¹²⁴ John Bennett, Victorian Council of Civil Liberties to Minister for Labour and Immigration, 7.5.1975, Bernard Freedman, Director, Immigration Information Branch, Australian Information Service, to W. G. Kiddle, Assistant Director-General, Migrant Community Services, DSS, 14.3.1975, 75/79729, CRS A446 T31, AA.

¹²⁵ Ronald F. Henderson, *Poverty in Australia*, First Main Report, April 1975, Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, AGPS, Canberra, 1975, p.viii and p. 269-81.

1947-71, it pointed out 21.6% Greeks, 19.5% Italians 19.8% Yugoslavs and 20.8% Maltese had left Australia permanently. It attributed much of this disillusionment to systemic discrimination against aliens and the community's failure to recognise and respond to the language needs of migrants. The 1971 Census had revealed that a large proportion of the migrant population was barely literate. The inadequacy of community interpreting after a quarter century of immigration was severely criticised.¹²⁶

Seeking to understand and remove the causes of migrant non-compliance

Government concern to discover the obstacles preventing migrants from integrating with the host community is evidenced by the spate of government enquiries initiated in 1973 and 1974. The Immigration Advisory Council's Community Relations Committee inquiry into discrimination against migrants and the extent to which migrants made use of community services, was tabled in Parliament in September 1974. This resulted in measures to eliminate all discrimination against non-citizens and the adoption from 1 January 1975 of uniform entry criteria (except for New Zealanders). It also resulted in the provision of funds to establish full time courses for interpreters and translators at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, the Canberra College of Advanced Education and part-time courses at the University of New South Wales throughout 1975, pending the creation of permanent courses, and the provision of English classes in prisons.

The Committee on Community Relations commissioned a survey by the Department of Labour and Immigration into migrant use of community facilities and resources in 1975. It investigated the extent to which migrant's failure to use community resources could be attributed to communication problems which left them ignorant of services, or whether these services were structured in ways which made them inaccessible to migrants.

Investigations were also conducted at State and local government level. In 1973-74 reports by Migrant Task Force Committees in all

¹²⁶ Andrew Jakubowicz and Berenice Buckley, *Migrants and the Legal System*, Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, Law and Poverty Series, AGPS, Canberra, 1975.

States on the settlement problems were tabled in Parliament, and in June 1975 a report on migrant settlement and integration problems of migrants as perceived by local governments was tabled.¹²⁷

CONCLUSION

The introduction of approximately 1.7 million aliens into a population of almost 13 million by 1975 weakened neither the Australian State nor the nation. This was the direct result of the commitment of the Commonwealth government to using the immigration powers given to it by the Constitution to facilitate compliance by these non-British immigrants with its intention that they become absorbed into the host community and obey all the laws and regulations to which they were subject as permanent residents. The success of the government in facilitating the path for aliens from immigrant to settler to citizen is reflected in the numbers taking up Australian citizenship (a total of 822,779 by 1975)¹²⁸

Rather than damaging mainstream society, immigration has benefited it. Attempts to provide solutions to migrants' problems have frequently drawn attention to groups within the community whose needs had been previously overlooked. In providing for immigrants' communication needs, for example, the State came to recognise and is addressing the needs of non-migrant adults and children with literacy problems, and the communication problems facing Aborigines of non-English speaking background.

The government's determination to address the language problems of migrants does not seem to have been inspired by economic considerations. The major employers of migrant labour did not appear to value an English-speaking and literate workforce, otherwise they would have encouraged, rather than resisted, the provision of government-sponsored English language classes in the workplace. Their failure to provide skilled interpreters, and information in the workplace in translation, indicates that communication was not seen by employers as an economic advantage at that stage of Australia's industrial development.

¹²⁷ CPD, HR, vol 96, pp. 1719-29, 2.10.1975.

¹²⁸Department of Immigration, *Australian Immigration. Quarterly Statistical Summary* December 1975.

The provision of language-related settlement services was not in response to demands from the migrant communities themselves. In the period under consideration most were still social clubs and few had made the transition to service-providers for their communities, or to political lobby groups.

The determination to include alien immigrants into Australian society was largely cultural. It can be related to both the way Australians perceived the role of the State, and to their understanding of Australian national identity. The formation of the Australian State was influenced both by utilitarian philosophy and by a later form of social liberalism than the earlier rights-based contractarian liberalism so influential in American political history. Australians invested the State with an ethical role as the vehicle of social justice. They were also political pragmatists.¹²⁹ Their expectation that the government should respond to legitimate demands has led to a tradition of bureaucratic creativity which was manifested in the solutions provided by the Department of Immigration to the communication needs of non-English speaking migrants.

The image of Australia as a country of British origins and traditions led Australians to conceptualise the strategies necessary to preserve this as 'assimilation'. As the mainstream Australians became more familiar with the migrant presence, and as migration changed Australian demography, they began to conceive of Australia as a 'homogeneous society' and referred to settlement strategies as 'integration'. From 1972 Australia's pluralist nature has been recognised as 'multiculturalism'. These linguistic shifts reflect stages in the reconceptualisation of Australian national identity.

Australian multiculturalism is shaped by Australian history, demography and culture, and differs even from the Canadian model from which the term was derived. This is particularly evident in the way Australia has coped with the linguistic diversity which has resulted from immigration. While English remains the official language of Australia, the Government supports cultural and organisational measures such as the National Policy on Languages and the Special Broadcasting Service (which broadcasts in 60 different languages), in

¹²⁹Marian Sawyer, 'Reclaiming Social Liberalism: The Women's Movement and the State', *Journal of Australian Studies*, forthcoming (June 1993).

recognition the fact that Australians now speak over 100 different languages in their homes.

While Australia's success in absorbing immigrants lay in its Constitution and its culture, so also did the obstacles it had to overcome, as this paper illustrates in detail. While cultural change has occurred, the legacy of past failures is, unfortunately, permanent for some sections of the migrant community. It is reflected in the high rates of unemployment among older migrants with a poor command of English who have been retrenched as the result of the radical restructuring of those industries they were brought to Australia to develop.¹³⁰

130 For example, see Michael Morrissey, Maureen Dibden and Colleen Mitchell, et. al., *Immigration and Industry Restructuring in the Illawarra*, Bureau of Immigration Research, AGPS, Canberra, 1992.

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