Date Introduced: 22 February 1985
House: House of Representatives
Presented by: Hon. C. Hurford, M.P., Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs

Short Digest of Bill

Purpose

To amend the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs Act 1979.

Background

The Government has received two reports on the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA).

The Report of the Committee of Review of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, chaired by Dr Moss Cass, was tabled on 8 December 1983. The Review identified a continuing role for Commonwealth involvement in the promotion of equity and access to opportunities for groups within the Australian community who were disadvantaged by their ethnic or cultural differences. The Review also recommended that the Council of the AIMA discuss the Review's Report with interested ethnic and other community groups and individuals.

The result of those discussions was "Looking Forward", tabled on 6 June 1984. This report from the Council of the AIMA said there was widespread community support for the general ideas of multiculturalism but that there was a particular need to relate multicultural policy to all Australians.

Main Provisions

Clause 3 amends section 5 of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs Act 1979, the Principal Act, to substitute a new paragraph concerning objects of the AIMA. Sub-para (a)(i) and para (d) are omitted from section 5 and the new para (d) reads:
"(d) to promote a just and equitable society that -

(i) accepts people irrespective of their particular ethnic or cultural background (including linguistic background or immigrant origin; and

(ii) affords the members of the different cultural groups and ethnic communities in Australia the effective opportunity to participate in Australian society and to achieve their own potential".

Clause 4 refers to the functions of AIMA. Subsections (1) and (2) of section 6 are omitted and new subsection 6(1) provides that the functions be, inter alia:

- to provide advice to the Commonwealth Government related to the achievement of the objects of AIMA;
- assist in achievement of AIMA objects by encouraging and promoting relevant educational activities and commissioning and encouraging research;
- liaise and co-operate with Commonwealth Departments, State and local government, trade unions, employer groups, the media and other organisations;
- to promote co-ordination of projects which may contribute to the objects of AIMA.

Clause 5 amends section 20 to increase the governing Council of the AIMA from nine to a maximum of twelve members.

Clause 6 inserts a new section 46A which declares AIMA to be a public authority to which Division 3 of Part XI of the Audit Act 1901 applies.

Clause 7 substitutes a new section 49 covering certain issues on which the AIMA must report annually.

The Schedule to the Bill makes many minor and consequential amendments. Most are concerned with eliminating the sex specific terminology of the legislation.

For further information, if required, contact:

19 March 1985

Education and Welfare Group
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