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# M1995-42 The Australian South Sea Islander Community

## Detailed Outline

The Australian South Sea Islanders are the descendants of people from the South Sea islands who were brought to work in Queensland between 1863 and 1904.

Precise numbers are difficult to obtain, but most live in Queensland, while around 1,400 are thought to live in the Lismore-Tweed area of NSW with several hundred in the Sydney area.

In 1994, the Federal Government recognised the community as a distinct ethnic group, following preparation of a report *The Call for Recognition: A Report on the Situation of Australian South Sea Islanders* by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. One consequence of this recognition is that members of the community no longer have access to services specifically targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As members of the Australian South Sea Islander community value their distinct ethnic status, I request firstly that you ensure that agencies in your portfolio area are aware of this community in NSW. Secondly I request that you ensure that the particular needs of Australian South Sea Islanders are adequately reflected in the programs and services of agencies, particularly those operating in the Far North Coast Area.

Your cooperation in this matter is appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Bob Carr  
Premier

ATTACHMENT

ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN SOUTH SEA ISLANDER COMMUNITY

Size of the community

The precise size of the Australian South Sea Islander community is difficult to obtain as this community is not reflected in Census data. Estimates suggest that there are approximately 15,000 to 20,000 Australian South Sea Islanders in Australia, most of whom live in Queensland. Around 1,400 are thought to live in the Lismore-Tweed area of NSW with several hundred in the Sydney area.

## Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Report

In 1994, the Federal Government recognised the Australian South Sea Islander community as an ethnic group experiencing severe disadvantage and discrimination. This recognition followed a report prepared by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) *The Call for Recognition: The Situation of Australian South Sea Islanders*. This report notes that government agencies:

'should consider whether their programs or activities have particular relevance to Australian South Sea Islanders, and where the programs are not relevant or are culturally inappropriate, the agencies should consult with Australian South Sea Islander people and take account of their particular needs and wishes'.

### **Key Issues for the Community**

The HREOC Report identifies a number of areas requiring attention from State Government agencies. These include housing, employment, education and health services, where Australian South Sea Islanders have lower participation rates than community averages for these indicators.

### **Current Projects**

The Federal Government has funded a community development project to work with the Australian South Sea Islander community. This project is based at the Queensland Bureau of Ethnic Affairs and will work with the community in northern NSW, as well as with groups in Queensland.

### **Further information**

The Ethnic Affairs Commission is the agency with responsibility for this matter in NSW. The Chair of the Commission, Mr Stepan Kerkyasharian, can be contacted for further advice, as can Ms Patricia Giannotto, Policy and Liaison Officer, on telephone 02/7162293.

October, 1995

## Overview

Who needs to know and/or comply with this?

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