



Western Australian Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Across-Government Network

Background

The *Western Australian Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) Across-Government Network* is known as WACAN.

In February 2004, officers from six human service agencies met and established an informal network to support officers working to advance access to government services for their CaLD clients. Despite its informal status, the network has provided significant input to the State Government's response to CaLD issues and proved to be a valuable resource for feedback on implementation of policies and services. In 2010, the network was formalised and currently has representatives from 19 public sector agencies.

Objectives

The purpose of WACAN is not only to identify and share information on key issues affecting Western Australian CaLD communities but also to facilitate the development and promotion of strategic responses through either a whole-of-government approach or individual agency responses.

Current members are involved with one or more of the portfolios/areas of: cultural diversity, community diversity, access, equity and participation, substantive equality, inclusion, service delivery, primary support services, and strategy, policy and planning.

Achievements

Since 2010, WACAN has had three standing items: language services, substantive equality and data collection. The network has achieved a great deal on these issues through input and feedback in relation to:

- ▣ the review of the *Western Australian Language Services Policy 2008*
- ▣ the development of the Common Use Arrangement for Translating and Interpreting
- ▣ agency-specific language services policies
- ▣ the Equal Opportunity Commission's substantive equality program
- ▣ the development of the Office of Multicultural Interests *Guide to cultural and linguistic data collection for the public sector*.

Benefits

WACAN provides a forum to identify common issues and concerns and share good practice stories, a space to receive and provide honest feedback, and, where appropriate, propose workable strategies to improve service delivery approaches for CaLD clients. Membership of WACAN helps overcome any isolation an officer might feel if working alone on these issues or as part of only a small team. Network membership provides collegial support and the often needed boost to confidence required to face and address challenging issues. Brainstorming issues that members may be struggling with can lead to solutions at operational, policy and service delivery levels.

WACAN representatives also establish and maintain contacts with other agencies facilitating across-departmental collaboration and perspectives.

WACAN membership provides agency representatives with a holistic view as well as a comprehensive approach to CaLD issues across the public sector. It also presents the opportunity to collaborate on issues of mutual interest and learn from the knowledge and expertise of others. Membership offers increased awareness of other agency initiatives and issues and an effective mechanism for the promotion of one's own projects.

WACAN members are also the 'first port of call' when information is required from a particular agency. Even if the query is about an issue which is not part of their portfolio, one can be sure to be directed to the right person. This is a great benefit, especially when one needs the information urgently.

Future plans

Over the next two years, WACAN aims to identify a few priority focus areas for which across-government outcomes or targets could be developed. The members also aim to establish a process through which to link the deliberations of WACAN to more senior decision-making groups for endorsement of strategic responses and to achieve positive across-government outcomes.