

Political Pathfinder

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Jim Samios

NSW Shadow Minister for Ethnic Affairs and former chairperson of NSW Ethnic Communities' Council (ECC), identifies the key reasons for the ECC's success in directing ethnic affairs policy.

Since the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW celebrated its 10th anniversary, the Council has continued to lead the way in the development of progressive multicultural and ethnic affairs policies. It has achieved this by lifting the consciousness of political parties, community leaders and organisations as to the importance of the fundamental issues concerning our multicultural society today.

Whilst the Council's role has been essentially that of a pathfinder, it has correctly and effectively moved, where possible, in tandem with political parties operating on a bipartisan basis. In this regard, it has been able to help influence community opinion more effectively and so strengthen our social cohesion.

Its strong support for the NSW Racial Vilification legislation in 1989 paved the way for similar initiatives in other States and Territories throughout Australia. Its participation in the review of that legislation which I conducted enabled the legislation to be strengthened in 1994. The Council also welcomed the Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society, the Magna Carta of multiculturalism introduced by the Fahey

Government in 1993.

I believe that the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW with its increasing representation of community based structures continues to reflect the growing number of ethnic communities in our culturally diverse society.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW, I would like to pay tribute to the dedication and commitment of its management and members and to the able chairmanship of its seventh chairperson, Angela Chan. Let us hope, as we enter the next millennium, that the Council will continue to make its voice heard as it champions the cause for social justice and equality for all Australians of all races and beliefs.