



# Cross-Cultural Skills For State Government Agencies

**A one-day program**

## **Why cultural competence for state government agencies?**

In all states of Australia, with populations originating from more than 220 birthplaces and speaking over 200 languages, it is more important than ever that those working in a state government agency are continually improving their ability to function cross-culturally. As well as designing policies, providing services and enforcing laws in and for a multicultural community, state government agencies are also now employers of multicultural workforces. And where once the immigrant ethnic and linguistic diversity of Australia was confined to the capital cities, now non-English speaking background immigrants, including refugees and those arriving on 457 visas, are found in virtually all regional cities and towns. Contrary to popular myth, cultural differences between Anglo-Australian culture and immigrant cultures are often significant and can lead to misunderstandings and communication breakdowns costing time and money. Many of the policies designed, services provided, and laws enforced by state government agencies will be completely unfamiliar to a fair percentage of new settlers. Anglo-Australian culture, not to mention our unique form of English, will not be easy for newcomers to understand. Good quality training can provide staff with the attitudes, information and skills to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers so that agencies can benefit from the diversity of their staff and optimise relationships with their diverse communities, while designing policies, delivering services and enforcing laws efficiently and fairly.

## **Margaret Bornhorst and state government issues**

Margaret Bornhorst is one of the most knowledgeable and skilled cross-cultural teachers and facilitators in Australia today, with 26 years' experience designing and conducting training programs for government, not-for-profit and business sectors in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and the ACT. During her 14 years with Multicultural Affairs Queensland and since, Margaret has designed and delivered programs for virtually all state government agencies in Queensland, and many of these programs were delivered in regional Queensland.

## **Margaret Bornhorst's training approach**

Margaret uses an adult learning process which is enjoyable, stimulating and rich in information and insights. There is an emphasis on participants sharing their knowledge and experience. Her programs are dynamic and inspirational. She combines the best theory with a practical focus and unthreatening experiential elements. Her background in theatre gives her training a uniquely engaging quality while maintaining a focus on practical outcomes. As well as the benefits to organisational efficiency, all programs also promote the principle of personal and professional enrichment from the exploration of the cultures and languages of the world.

## **Margaret Bornhorst Cross-Cultural**

Margaret Bornhorst Cross-Cultural is a consultancy based in Brisbane. It provides innovative and creative solutions to challenges created by cultural and linguistic diversity. It can provide short and long programs for organisations, keynotes and workshops for conferences, and events for festivals.

*Embracing cultural and linguistic diversity... by creating resourceful individuals, effective workplaces, and harmonious and prosperous communities.*



## Program content options

- Defining cultural competence for state government agencies.
- Queensland multicultural and anti-discrimination policies.
- Queensland and local birthplace and language statistics.
- Anglo-Australian culture: what are its characteristics and how hard is it for newcomers to understand it?
- The key features of the migration/refugee experience, including culture shock.
- Cultural differences affecting state government operations: a) customs governing politeness and courtesy important for achieving rapport and respect; b) cultural differences between individual-focused cultures and family-focused cultures.
- Differences between the Australian legal system and those of the countries-of-origin.
- Identifying cultural differences (Totally Foreign Concepts) specific to individual departments.
- Overcoming language barriers. Option 1: how to work effectively with professional interpreters. Option 2: how to improve your ability to understand unfamiliar 'foreign' accents, and how to modify your English appropriately to support people who are second language learners of English.
- A Guest Panel of people from local ethnic communities invited to share their experiences of migration and settlement with participants.
- The extraordinary personal and professional rewards possible from an exploration of culture and language.

## Goal outcomes

That participants leave the program ...

1. more aware of their own culture/s
2. more conscious of the range of cultures now part of the state
3. more knowledgeable about the (usually painful) process of changing countries and cultures
4. more competent and confident interacting with, and providing effective services to, and designing appropriate policies for, people of many different cultures, ethnicities, appearances, behaviours and accents
5. more skilled in overcoming one or more of the three language barriers
6. more aware of the challenges and benefits of creating effective multicultural teams
7. knowing where to go for additional cultural and linguistic information
8. with a better idea of how both their personal development and the goals of their department can be advanced together.

## What participants have said

*'Would have liked the training to be longer.'* *'The day went too fast! Everything was wonderful.'* *'I really enjoyed the DVD segments and the last session with the young woman and accents.'* *'Very good training. Good emphasis on using accredited interpreters.'* *'Engaging.'* *'Thanks for your effort and enthusiasm.'* *'Excellent detail and Margaret knows her subject very well. Guest speakers really hit home. Very inspiring.'*

## Myths revealed

- Differences between cultures are insignificant so it's okay to ignore them.
- People who are nervous about people who look or sound different from themselves are racist.
- Someone who is born in another country, or who is a member of an ethnic (NESB) community, is automatically cross-culturally competent and bilingually or multilingually proficient.
- Language barriers can be overcome by good will alone.