

UNESCO has just published a report extolling the virtues of diversification for multinational corporations. In Australia, the message has been resonating for the last two decades

WITH over one quarter of Australians born overseas, companies which don't take a multicultural approach could be seriously limiting their capacity.

It also means they're potentially leaving many of Australia's 5.5 million migrants from over 200 countries in the dark.

The success of this year's Multicultural Marketing Awards, suggests this message is widely catching on. Held in Sydney on Monday, the event attracted a record crowd with entries from a diverse range of companies and government organisations.

Now in its 20th year, this year's event came just weeks after the release of a UNESCO report, *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*.

In a section headed *Cultural Diversity and The Business*, the report states: "Multinational corporations are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of diversifying their products in order to penetrate new markets and meet the expectations of local consumers."

According to Community Relations Commission chair, Stepan Kerkyasharian, this is a field in which Australian companies are leading the way.

"Looking at the UNESCO report, it seems what we have been doing for the past 20 years is groundbreaking stuff, 20 years ahead of its time," he said.

But this isn't to discount how far Australia has come over the period: "Twenty years ago, a majority of enterprises in Australia would have been looking at surveys done by marketing companies, but if the surveyor went around to people who didn't speak English, they'd just walk away," Mr Kerkyasharian said. "They didn't get past the first post of finding out what people wanted.

"Now, they run focus groups in different languages, not only to make information available in different languages, but to identify cultural idiosyncracies and directly target them."

And according to Mr Kerkyasharian, there is still plenty of potential for Australian companies to build on their current strengths in multicultural marketing.

"I think we have a lot of new exciting challenges which can and should be exploited," he said. "The opportunities to do things differently are so great when you look at things from a multicultural marketing perspective.

"It may require some extra effort to look at things from a different dimension and understand all the subtleties, but as this year's winners show, it's worth it."

Export Award winner, Polyglot, for example, took the overall top gong for basing its entire business model on Australia's multiculturalism. The boutique human resources consultancy employs people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and with their expertise, helps companies overcome cultural and language issues when they expand abroad.

The model has proven highly successful in the local and international market, with exports now representing 30 per cent of Polyglot's income. According to Mr Kerkyasharian, Polyglot is an

ultimate example of how embracing and supporting Australia's multiculturalism can benefit all involved.

"The whole business is based on the understanding that people of different cultural backgrounds can be a very valuable human resource," he said.

In the Information Technology category, Sydney suburban newspaper, *Northern District Times*, was chosen for featuring Chinese and Korean versions of selected news stories on its website, to cater to the high percentage of Chinese and Korean-speakers in its distribution area.

"Overcoming this language barrier has huge financial and social gains," Mr Kerkyasharian said. "Local businesses are able to better advertise and market their products, the council and local institutions have their news spread to more people, and tens of thousands more people in the area are suddenly able to know what's going on in their neighbourhood."

AFL Community Award Winner, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA), and the National Prescribing Service targeted an area in which the language barrier can be dangerous or even fatal through their *Get to Know Your Medicines* campaign.

The three-month campaign specifically focussed on Italian, Cantonese and Mandarin-speaking seniors, as those with low English language proficiency run a higher risk of misusing medicines through misunderstanding.

Along with national radio advertisements, the campaign also involved radio interviews and talkback segments with bilingual health professionals, and a range of informative bilingual materials.

"It's something that can literally be a matter of life or death," Mr Kerkyasharian said. "It's not unusual for older people to be taking five to 10 medications a day, and if they're not fully conversant in English, getting it right can be a big issue."

On a lighter note, Woolworths took out the Commercial Big Business award for their humorous *Maria and Stavros* commercial, which, in an unusual move for a major Australian retailer, is spoken entirely in Greek. It features an argument between an elderly couple about birds eating their tomato plants, with their gestures ensuring the scene is easily understood by all.

Public reactions to the ad, which was also posted on You Tube, suggests the supermarket giant achieved its aim of reflecting the diversity of its customers and making an emotional connection with a broad audience.

The posting received tens of thousands of hits, with viewers from a range of cultural backgrounds commenting that the couple reminded them of their own parents or grandparents.

Mr Kerkyasharian sees the high number of entries from large organisations, such as Woolworths, as a reassuring trend: "We're seeing lots of companies from the big end of town entering into the field of multicultural marketing because they know it's good business, it opens up new markets to them."

Now the big  
end of town is  
setting the pace

# Multicultural Marketing Awards 31

## When life is just a bowl of fruit salad

BOUTIQUE human resources consultancy, Polyglot Group, was the big winner at last Monday night's National Multicultural Marketing Awards. Besides picking up the prestigious Export Award, the company picked up the main gong as the Grand Award Winner.

According to Polyglot managing director, Corinne Bot, the company's secret is simple. "We are selling what we are, what Australia represents," she told *The Australian*.

"We are promoting Australia as a truly multicultural nation, which is a huge advantage globally. I came to Australia around 20 years ago from France, and the way in which multiculturalism is part of society just doesn't happen in France."

In the company's submission to the awards, Polyglot stated its entire business model and strategy is based on promoting, and turning into an asset, the multiculturalism of Australian society.

Ms Bot said: "Polyglot assists companies with the multicultural and multilingual issues affecting their international expansion – be it Australian companies expanding overseas or foreign companies investing in Australia.

"Here, we tap our multicultural resources much better than other countries. Moreover, it's a market that's tapped differently in each city."

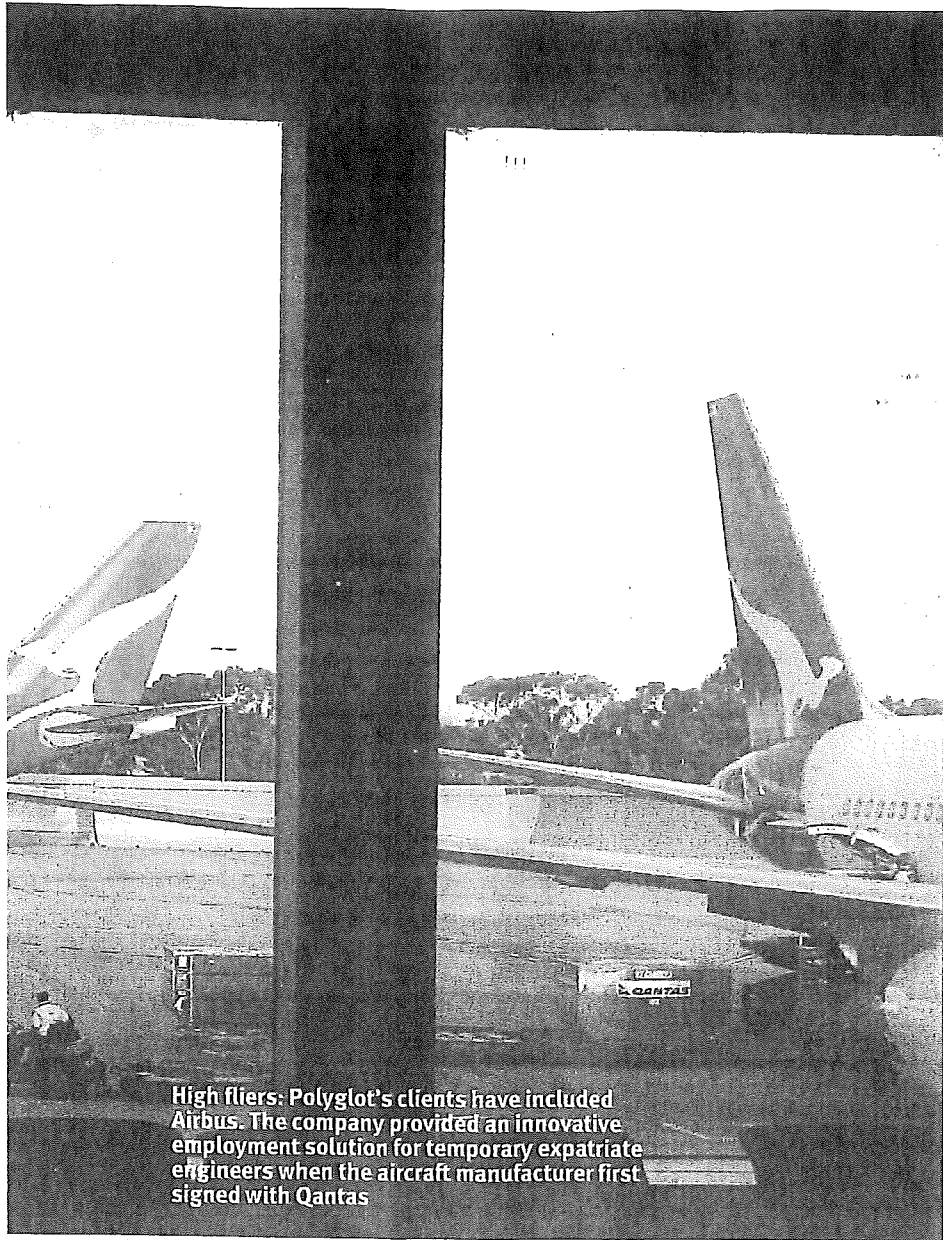
"I like to think of Australia as not a melting pot where everything melds together, but more of a fruit salad – everyone keeps their flavour and colour, but we're all mixed and, importantly, it tastes good."

Polyglot has successfully tapped into Australia's cultural diversity in a number of ways. Even in its own office, more than 10 languages are spoken, which has assisted them take their business to the world.

Ms Bot and her husband, Gerald, set up shop just over 15 years ago and have seen it grow into a business in which 40 per cent of its turnover comes from export sales. Its primary international markets are in Asia, Europe and the Pacific Islands.

A key to the company's success is its employees, who have the experience in Polyglot's major markets.

Major clients have included Airbus, whom Polyglot provided with an innovative employment solution for temporary expatriate engineers when the aircraft manufacturer first signed with Qantas.



**High fliers:** Polyglot's clients have included Airbus. The company provided an innovative employment solution for temporary expatriate engineers when the aircraft manufacturer first signed with Qantas

During the 2003 World Cup, the company satisfied the requirements of the International Rugby Board, who needed to recruit and employ 30 reporters broadcasting in various languages.

The company has also worked with global powerhouses such as Nestle and Alcan in their target markets.

"In the last census, we worked with the Federal Government out of a call centre, answering enquiries in 20 different languages," Ms Bot said.

"What we are doing is oiling the whole human resources process, from payroll to recruitment and training, through to specialist language services and cross-cultural training for expatriate executives."

According to the company, its whole business model is geared towards servicing global clients in Australia and overseas, with a commitment to consistently deliver top quality service to its clients as they also expand globally.

At present, the company continues to bid on large projects and maintains offices in all the state capitals.

"We have grown quickly in the last few years and built a great international network with like-minded companies," Ms Bot says.

"Importantly, we have very good people around the world and, at present, we are the only company trying to do this. We are a company which maintains an open mind and always look to the horizon."

And for Polyglot, Australia remains the ideal base. "It's still a young country which embraces change and innovation," Ms Bot said.



**The Community Relations Commission  
For a multicultural NSW  
Congratulates the finalists and winners of the  
2009 National Multicultural Marketing Awards**



**Information Technology Award**

- Winner**  
Northern District Times
- Finalists**  
Etranstate

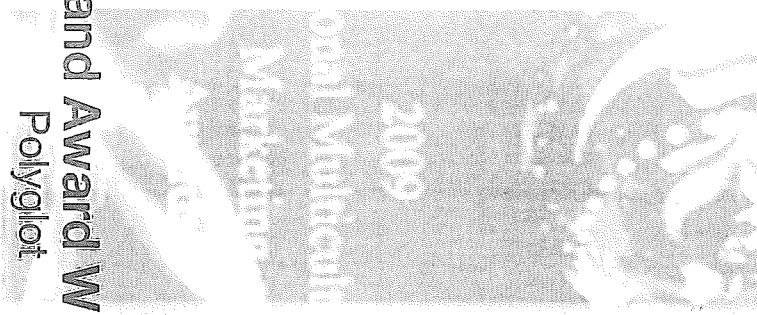
**AFL Community Award**

- Winner**  
FECCA and the National Prescribing Service
- Finalists**  
Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory  
Ethnic Communities Council of NSW  
Radio 2MFM (High Commendation)

**Commercial Big Business Award**

- Winner**  
Woolworths
  - Finalists**  
Western Union Financial Services
- Advertising Award**

- Winner**  
Haystack Positive Outcomes
- Finalists**  
Cultural Perspectives (High Commendation)  
NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service



**Grand Award Winner  
Polyglot**

**CMC Markets Government Award**

- Winner**  
Department of Ageing Disability and Homecare
- Finalists**  
University of Southern Queensland (High Commendation)  
Australian Taxation Office  
NSW Office of Fair Trading

**Export**

- Winner**  
Polyglot
- Finalists**  
Sherrea

**Commonwealth Bank Commercial  
Small Business Award**

- Winner**  
UBI World TV
- Finalists**  
LOTE Marketing  
Cultural Acts