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Ecumenical Migration Centre

A vital part of Melbourne's response to postwar immigration, the Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC) originated in an espresso bar in North Carlton in the late 1950s, moving later to Fitzroy, Richmond, Footscray and Collingwood, before becoming part of the Brotherhood of St Laurence in 1999. Known initially as the European Australian Christian Fellowship, its role gradually expanded beyond welfare to promoting racial tolerance through advocacy, education and community development. Eric Richards from the Resettlement Department of the Australian Council of Churches and David Cox, president of the Victorian Christian Youth Council, were instrumental in its foundation.

A long-standing and insistent critic of government policy and practice, by the 1970s the EMC was part of a network of organisations campaigning for ethnic rights and participation, in 1973 establishing the Clearing House on Migration Issues (CHOMI) to publish on multiculturalism. Over time, it has moved from a church to a community-based organisation and has become increasingly active around refugee issues.

Struggling to survive in the face of uncertain government and private funding, it depends largely on the work of a small team of dedicated volunteers but continues to play a significant role in the development of multiculturalism, using its journal Migration Action to stimulate public debate, ensure that ethnic minorities have a voice, and influence government policy on issues concerning migrant settlement, participation and rights.


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