

# THE VOICE OF ETHNIC AUSTRALIA

"This program is the salt that has been missing from the soup that is my life in Australia," wrote an Italian listener to Radio 2EA, The Voice of Ethnic Australia.

The radio station, launched recently as a project of the Community Relations Commission headed by Mr Al Grassby, broadcasts programs in Greek, Maltese, Spanish, Arabic, Italian, Turkish and Yugoslav.

Since its inception, thousands of letters have arrived at the radio offices in Sydney and Melbourne, and the Director of Programs, Clare Dunne, is kept busy referring them on to the various representatives of each community.

Not only migrants listen: many Australians tune in too, to enjoy the music. This varies from

## Al Grassby's radio helps fill a void

pop to classical: it could include a Yugoslav operetta, South American pop, Spanish guitar music, choirs, folk music — "and the Maltese are always asking for marches."

In between, there are interviews, talks, information on social services, explanations of Australian customs and some sports. "The Italians are giving a history of their race in Australia," said Miss Dunne.

"They've discovered there was one Italian in the First Fleet!" They also give information on local regions in Italy, for Italian children growing up here.

"We know we're effective," smiled Miss Dunne. "One day in the Turkish session we mentioned there were special benefits for pregnant women under certain circumstances. The next day the office was flooded with pregnant Turkish ladies!"

The radio station is funded by the Attorney General's Office. It is a 12-week experiment which will end on August 31 in Sydney. The Department of the Media is carrying out a research project to decide whether the programs will be continued, and in what form.

At the moment Clare Dunne commutes between Sydney and Melbourne to co-ordinate all the programs, which are different in each city due to local content. "In Melbourne we also have a German group. It's very romantic. For instance, the man who does it went out and recorded lyre bird calls and then told the story of the lyre bird."

For those isolated because they cannot speak English the programs are the highlight of the day. One Greek man, interviewed in the street, said

it was the first time his wife had ever managed to get up at 6.30 in the morning.

A group of Greek schoolgirls at a Sydney school wrote to say they all listened to the mid-day program in their lunch hour. And workers in a Melbourne clothing factory reported that the program "makes the day go quickly."

Mr Grassby manages to send a message in all the languages used at the end of each program. "And I know how to say nine in seven languages," Clare Dunne laughed. "The Medibank post box number is 9999, and we often give it during the sessions."



Clare Dunne . . . saying nine in seven languages.