

20 June 2016



Senator Rachel Siewert  
Spokesperson for Older People  
Australian Greens

**Re: Federal election commitment to seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds**

Dear Senator Siewert

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the peak policy advocacy body for Victoria's ethnic and multicultural communities in Victoria with a membership of 220 organisations and individuals.

On behalf of Victoria's culturally, linguistically, and spiritually diverse senior voters, ECCV invites you, and the other major political parties, to respond to five questions of significant interest to our members and stakeholders. We propose to make your position on older people known through our extensive multicultural networks, such as readership of [Golden Years](#), our multicultural online ageing and aged care magazine, members of our Policy Advisory Committee on Aged Care, that represents about 30 of Victoria's key ethnic and multicultural aged care agencies, as well as our extensive media and social media network.

According to the 2011 Census, approximately 30 percent of Victorian seniors are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Seniors of the top 10 culturally diverse ageing groups in Victoria amount to almost 140,000 people. A significant number of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds are aged pensioners. ECCV advocates for better access of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds to ethno-specific and culturally inclusive ageing and aged care services. For details, see [ECCV Multicultural Aged Care Strategy](#).

ECCV estimates that there are more than 500 ethnic and multicultural incorporated seniors associations in Victoria enabling social participation and support for seniors. ECCV believes ethnic seniors clubs need to be better linked to Australian Government services. ECCV community feedback indicates that significant numbers of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds have low or no digital literacy. Since Australian Government services including the [MyAgedCare](#) online portal are transitioning to *digital* many culturally and linguistically diverse seniors are overwhelmed by these changes and miss out on services they deserve for a quality of life and wellbeing.

We invite you to state your 2016 Federal election commitment to seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds, in response to the following questions:

**Patron**  
Her Excellency, The Honourable  
Linda Dessau AM, Governor of Victoria

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1. What will be your policy on aged pensions if you are elected into Government?
2. What will be your policies to promote equitable access of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds to Australian Government Services, including MyAgedCare?
3. What will be your policies to build the capacity of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds to utilise and access digital technology and devices?
4. What commitment do you give in terms of strengthening cultural diversity polices across the Commonwealth Home Support Programme?
5. Why should seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds in Victoria and clients of Australian Government subsidised ageing and aged care services vote for your party?

Kindly email your election commitment on this issue to ECCV until 27 June 2016. For more information, please contact ECCV Aged Care Policy Officer Nikolaus Rittinghausen on 03 9349 4122 and [nrittinghausen@eccv.org.au](mailto:nrittinghausen@eccv.org.au).

Sincerely



Eddie Micallef  
Chairperson

Cc: Commonwealth Minister for Aged Care; Shadow Minister for Ageing

# **Australian Greens response to ECCV letter in relation to Federal election commitment to Seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds June 2016**

Thank you for your letter regarding our 2016 Federal election commitment to seniors from non-english speaking backgrounds. Our vision is for older Australians to be able to continue to participate fully in their communities and have their skills, life experience and contributions recognised. We will support older Australians in the workplace, and work for a high quality aged care system. I will address your questions in turn.

## **1. What will be your policy on aged pensions if you are elected into Government?**

Our policy on aged pensions is unchanged. We have consistently opposed unfair cuts to the age pension and changing the age of eligibility. We have also fought the Coalition's proposed cuts to the Clean Energy Supplement for people who access income support after September 2016, which would take \$366.60 away from a single pensioner each year. We strongly oppose the creation of a two-tiered system and have pledged \$1.4 billion to reverse these cuts. To further address inequality we will establish an independent Equality Commission to provide independent advice to the Government and Parliament on setting rates of income support including the age pension.

## **2. What will be your policies to promote equitable access of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds to Australian Government Services, including MyAgedCare?**

We firmly believe that everyone should be supported as they age, and we will work for an aged care system that gives people the care and support they need at every stage. For people from non-English speaking backgrounds in particular, our plan to move towards consumer directed care puts the power of decision making in the hands of seniors and their families. Better investment in government services infrastructure, such as the MyAgedCare system, will facilitate better access to services for all seniors, and is especially important for those of non-English speaking backgrounds.

## **3. What will be your policies to build the capacity of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds to utilise and access digital technology and devices?**

We recognise that the increasing uptake of digital technology threatens to exclude seniors and especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds. It is important to us that everyone has access to the benefits of digital technologies, which is why we will instate a Digital Rights Commissioner to work out of the Australian Human Rights Commission. The role of the Commissioner will be to act as an advocate for the rights of all people in matters regarding the safety, accessibility, privacy and security of the digital world. By scrutinising legislation, the Commissioner will be able to ensure that new and existing laws do not infringe on human rights regarding digital spaces, and address discrimination in digital spaces.

**4. What commitment do you give in terms of strengthening cultural diversity policies across the Commonwealth Home Support Programme?**

Cultural diversity is an essential part of our society, so services to the community must reflect that. We strongly support cultural diversity, and want to see all aspects of aged care, including the Commonwealth Home Support Programme, reflect and cater for the rich diversity of our community. We will continue to campaign for an aged care system that meets people's needs, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

**5. Why should seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds in Victoria and clients of Australian Government subsidised ageing and aged care services vote for your party?**

The Greens have always stood up for what matters. Our party was founded on a belief in a fairer society that protects the most vulnerable, looks after our environment, and treats people with dignity and respect. We have repeatedly stood in Parliament to support older Australians and for a fairer aged care system. Most recently we are opposing cuts to aged care funding instrument (ACFI) of over \$1.6billion.

Our vision for Australia includes:

- A fairer tax system
- Inclusive communities
- A world class education sector
- Coal replaced with renewable energy
- A safe path for asylum seekers
- Adequate income support
- Action on global warming
- Support for older Australians

The Greens have a broad vision of positive ageing that focuses on the enormous positive contribution that older Australians make in our communities. The Greens will:

- Develop a national strategy for mature age workers
- Oppose \$1.6 billion of Coalition cuts to aged care
- Develop a plan for full consumer directed care
- Develop a national aged care workforce strategy
- Provide \$132.8m in additional funding and support for dementia
- Provide \$76m in additional funding for palliative care, to improve accessibility to palliative care

Thank you again for your letter. Please don't hesitate to contact my office if you have any further questions about our policies.

Yours sincerely

Senator Rachel Siewert  
Australian Greens Spokesperson on Ageing