



**ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria**

20 November 2009

ECCV SUBMISSION TO THE MELBOURNE/PORT PHILLIP/YARRA BUS SERVICE REVIEW

Inquiry into particular transport needs of the migrant and refugee communities in LGAs with high culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) density areas such as Maribyrnong and the Greater Dandenong Municipality

1. The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Metropolitan Bus Services Review's Inquiry into Transport Needs within Victoria's Migrant and Refugee Communities.
2. Established in 1974 as a voluntary community based organisation, ECCV advocates and lobbies all levels of government on behalf of multicultural communities in a range of areas. For over 30 years, ECCV has remained the principal liaison point between ethnic communities, government and the wider community in Victoria. Our role includes supporting, consulting, liaising with and providing information to Victoria's ethnic communities.
3. ECCV believes that the provision of equal access to a quality, safe and frequent cross-town bus network is a vital condition of equitable participation in our society.
4. ECCV commends the Department of Transport for undertaking a review of bus services in the City of Melbourne, City of Port Phillip and City of Yarra as it is vital to address issues for local community groups to ensure that the Victorian Transport Plan is meeting the needs of our local community.
5. ECCV encourages the Department of Transport to consider undertaking a similar review of public transport needs in regional centres with a concentration of new migrant and refugee communities.

Background on public transport usage by CALD communities

6. ECCV notes that some metropolitan local government areas (LGAs) such as Maribyrnong and Greater Dandenong have a higher concentration of migrant and refugee communities than others and that many members of these communities rely on public transport in their daily lives. Effectively, this means the demand for reliable and affordable public transport services within these municipalities is often disproportionately higher than elsewhere.
7. ECCV also notes that there are two CALD groups in particular within the Victorian population who make considerable use of the metropolitan bus service:
 - elderly migrants
 - newly-arrived migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants

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8. While there is some cross-over between the two groups in terms of their location and usage of public transport, there is also some key points of differentiation.
9. In terms of location, for example, seniors among the newly-arrived migrant and refugees communities tend to be found in those LGAs where newly-arrived migrant and refugees communities congregate, whereas seniors among more established migrant communities tend to be found in LGAs where more established migrant communities congregate. Although there are some LGAs that are notable for containing significant numbers of both groups
10. In terms of usage of public transport, their differences and commonalities can be summarised as follows.

Elderly migrants (established & newly-arrived)	Peak times of demand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home to shopping centre • Home to community centre • Home to friend's house • Home to hospital / health centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mid-morning / mid-afternoon • mid-morning / mid-afternoon / early evening / mid-evening • mid-morning / mid-afternoon / early evening / mid-evening • early-morning / mid-morning / mid-afternoon / early evening / mid-evening
newly-arrived migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home to workplace • Home to school / university / TAFE • Home to childcare centre • Home to shopping centre • Home to community centre • Home to friend's house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early morning / mid-morning / early afternoon / late afternoon / early evening / mid-evening / late evening • early morning / mid-morning / early afternoon / late afternoon / early evening / mid-evening / late evening • early morning / mid-morning / early afternoon / late afternoon • early morning / mid-morning / early afternoon / late afternoon / early evening / mid-evening / late evening • mid-morning / mid-afternoon / early evening / mid-evening • early morning / mid-morning / early afternoon / late afternoon / early evening / mid-evening / late evening

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- Home to hospital / health centre
- early morning / mid-morning / early afternoon / late afternoon / early evening / mid-evening / late evening

Key Issues regarding public transport and CALD communities

11. ECCV believes that there are five overarching and inter-related issues regarding the use of metropolitan public transport by new migrants and refugee communities. These are:
- Accessibility, connectability and timeliness of cross-town bus routes
 - Insufficient frequency of services in some areas
 - Affordability for low-income and socially disadvantaged communities
 - Availability of linguistically diverse information and signage
 - Security on night buses
 - Availability of wheelchair-accessible buses for disabled, elderly and physically impaired

Accessibility, connectability and timeliness

12. Due to the lack of connections between different activity centres and municipalities, refugees and other low-income migrant groups have to travel longer distances to access services and employment.
13. ECCV commends the Department of Transport for introducing SmartBus services and recommends extending these services and effectively linking them to more areas.

Frequency

14. The frequency of buses is also a growing area of dissatisfaction. Access to regular and reliable public transportation is an ongoing issue in many culturally and linguistically diverse communities, particularly for those with higher population households such as families with four or more children. A shortage of frequent buses places restrictions on mobility and severely curtails the capacity of many to travel.
15. ECCV is concerned that this lack of access relative to the number and frequency of bus routes has a serious impact on social connectedness and cohesion. For this segment of the population, a shortage of bus services may limit their capacity to not only access main service infrastructure such as healthcare and education facilities in metropolitan centres but also restrict their participation in the broader community.
16. Introducing new bus routes and providing additional and more frequent services to areas where there has been a growth in settlement is necessary to ensure that these communities can meet their most basic needs and integrate more effectively with the broader community.

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Affordability

17. ECCV acknowledges that the difficulties confronted by the unique socio-economic status of these communities raise the issue of affordable transportation. New arrivals are among the most disadvantaged when it comes to accessing affordable transportation. This is due to their financial situation, exposure to culture shocks, low English language skills and difficulty in accessing the job market. Thus, securing affordable transportation is an important part of the settlement process.

Linguistically diverse information

18. Navigating the bus network and understanding the process of commuting from one destination to another can be problematic to some communities. This is because accessing accurate and comprehensive information on these services is particularly poor among new migrants and refugees and older people from CALD backgrounds. ECCV therefore recommends developing useful information channels and materials about time of operation and cross-town connections.

Security

19. ECCV is concerned about the welfare and safety of commuters especially at night. It should be noted that the recent attacks on international students which have been prominent in Melbourne do not affect this particular group alone but also Australians who are from visible ethnic and religious minority backgrounds. To ensure that safety of all commuters is maintained, ECCV calls for an increase in the presence of authorised officers and transit safety division police on buses and at bus stop locations.

Wheelchair-accessible

20. In relation to elderly migrant commuters, ECCV recognises the mobility and transport barriers seniors face in accessing bus services and in maintaining their independence. ECCV suggests that mobility needs of elderly commuters are taken into consideration including the supply of wheelchair access to enable elderly migrants to use these services.

Conclusion

21. In conclusion, to better understand issues of demand and provide the service and security required by the community, ECCV calls for an improved bus network that is safe, accessible, frequent, affordable and closely linked to activity centres as this would assist new and established migrant communities to better access services.

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