



ECCV Submission
To the
Department of Social Services
On the
Commonwealth Home Support Programme Draft Manual
National Fees Policy Consultation Paper
And Good Practice Guide for Restorative Care Approaches

April 2015

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) appreciates the opportunity to submit to DSS on behalf of frail older people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds and ethno-specific and multicultural aged care providers. ECCV represents the voice of multicultural communities in Victoria. As a peak body we have advocated for seniors from a non-English speaking background since 1974.

Through its multicultural Access and Support network and its Aged Care Policy Sub-Committee, which consists of ethno-specific and multicultural aged care service providers, stakeholders, and community members, in March 2015 ECCV consulted on the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) Draft Manual, National Fees Policy Consultation Paper, and Good Practice Guide for Restorative Care Approaches.

Introduction

According to the 2011 Productivity Commission Inquiry Report, Caring for Older Australians, there is a growing diversity in aged care needs, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds over 65 year old are projected to grow another 43 per cent nationally in the next 15 years (47). There are a growing number of older people from new and emerging communities that have arrived in Australia more recently and they have limited access to culturally appropriate ageing and aged care services. At the same time, Australia is reforming its aged care system, with a greater focus on community care, Consumer Directed Care (CDC), and a single gateway to services.

As stated in the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) 2015 Review of Research on Older People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds, understanding and navigating the complex aged care system "presents an even greater challenge for older people with limited English, little or no experience of using *any* formal aged care services, or who have a different cultural perspective of ageing and what it means to age well" (9). Consequently, a large proportion of the CHSP and My Aged Care (MAC) Gateway clients nationally will experience

significant barriers in accessing services due to their cultural and linguistic diversity. ECCV highlights that approximately one third of Victorians aged 65 and over are from a non-English speaking background and therefore require culturally appropriate aged care services.

Culturally appropriate care

ECCV highlights that culturally appropriate care includes the following elements, in particular:

- Partnerships with ethno-specific and faith-based organisations
- Culturally specific dementia and palliative care
- Culturally sensitive aged care assessment
- Employment of bilingual staff
- Culturally appropriate food
- Cultural and spiritual care
- Same language services

Barriers of access to aged care services

The following factors represent barriers of access to aged care services for older people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds, which negatively impact upon the health, wellbeing and social inclusion outcomes of this target group:

- Lack of culturally appropriate information in the language of older people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds.
- Lack of knowledge in navigating Australian systems and services, particularly for migrants who arrive in Australia at an older age.
- Length of time in Australia and age at migration.
- Poorer overall socioeconomic status compared to the older Anglo-Australian population.
- Differing cultural practices and norms.
- The preference for family members to provide care.

Multiple vulnerabilities

In addition to language and cultural barriers, research (FECCA 2015, 10) indicates that older migrants from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds have the following multiple vulnerabilities when compared to the older Anglo-Australian population:

- lower rates of use of information technology
- lower rates of access to services
- an increased risk of poverty
- less superannuation savings
- likely to be in paid work
- lower levels of education

Research (FECCA 2015, 10) shows that such adverse health and social outcomes are exacerbated for those who migrate to Australia at an older age, including older refugees.

Victorian Government policies

ECCV acknowledges the long-term and sustainable commitment by the Victorian Government in supporting seniors from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds to access services. Reforms such as person centred care through the Active Service Model (ASM) and diversity planning and practice of the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program are important initiatives for meeting

the needs of older people from this target group. In addition, the Access and Support (A&S) program plays a crucial role in improving service access for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The Victorian HACC program and government provides funding targeted at seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds for programs and initiatives such as:

- HACC Language Services Credit Line
- HACC diversity and planning practice guide
- HACC Access and Support network and Policy Advocacy
- Ethno-specific Planned Activity Groups and Friendly Visiting programs
- Participation for CALD Seniors Grants
- Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) Community Grants.

Consultation findings and ECCV recommendations

Holistic assessment of individual goals, preferences and choices

ECCV highlights that seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds have a human right to access services that respond to their cultural, linguistic, and spiritual preferences and needs. When “taking into account each person’s individual goals, preferences and choices”, the CHSP must not only consider activities of daily living, but also the ability to remain socially and spiritually connected. Therefore, an entry-level assessment of an individual’s needs must be holistic and not solely focus on their ability to stay at home but also on what staying at home means for them in terms of remaining an active and connected member of the community and maintaining their cultural traditions.

Ethno-specific and multicultural ageing and aged care services provide vital care and social support to Victoria’s multicultural community, contributing significantly to the healthy ageing of a large proportion of the population and complementing and working in partnership with mainstream services. They have invaluable expertise in providing care that responds to cultural, linguistic, and spiritual preferences and needs of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds. Also, ECCV highlights that seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds have often a strong preference for ethno-specific and multicultural services.

Recommendation 1

That the CHSP provide an ongoing framework that supports ethno-specific and multicultural services in their capacity to cater to the individual goals, preferences and choices of people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Recommendation 2

That cultural competency training be embedded into the CHSP to ensure that all staff have an understanding of the needs of older people from non-English speaking backgrounds and how to provide culturally appropriate care.

Diversity planning mechanisms in the CHSP

ECCV commends the Commonwealth Government for embedding within the CHSP a wellness, reablement and restorative approach to aged care which draws on key elements of Victoria's Active Service Model (ASM). The ASM has worked to enhance the capacity of older people to live independently and evaluates older people's individual needs in a holistic manner.

ECCV highlights that it is important for the Good Practice Guide for Restorative Care Approaches to specify how to ensure the wellness and reablement of seniors from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and embed diversity planning and practice. ECCV believes that diversity planning mechanisms must be embedded into the CHSP in order to sensitise mainstream providers to respond to diversity. ECCV suggests engaging with the multicultural aged care sector on how the wellness and reablement approach can be best implemented for seniors from a non-English speaking background.

ECCV further highlights the importance of ethno-specific and multicultural Planned Activity Groups (PAGs) in increasing the wellbeing and reablement of seniors from a non-English speaking background. Ethno-specific PAGs provide frail, older people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds with:

- Same-language/same culture social contact
- Bilingual health and aged care information
- Referrals to a wider range of aged care services.

Recommendation 3

That the Good Practice Guide for Restorative Care Approaches specify how to ensure wellness and reablement of seniors from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and embed diversity planning and practice.

Recommendation 4

That the Commonwealth Government provide block funding for Planned Activity Groups (PAGS), including ethno-specific and multicultural PAGs, to ensure affordability for seniors from a non-English speaking and culturally diverse background who are otherwise at risk of social isolation.

Access and Support

In Victoria, the Access and Support (A&S) program enables people to live independently in the community and improves service uptake for people who encounter access barriers due to issues such as culture and language. Bilingual and bicultural A&S officers assist seniors from a non-English speaking background to navigate the HACC system and link them to HACC services.

Members of the ethnic and multicultural community aged care sector have emphasised how vital the face to face element of the A&S roles are; as relevant details of clients from a non-English speaking background are missed over the phone. Also, seniors from a non-English speaking background find it difficult to stay on the phone for extended periods especially as they need an interpreter for the phone assessment.

Recommendation 5

That the Commonwealth Government develop and pilot an operational roadmap to integrate the Victorian HACC Access and Support program into the MAC Gateway, CHSP, and Linkages system.

Recommendation 6

That the A&S program be continued in Victoria to establish an interface and link between the national end-to-end Aged Care service system, in particular assessment services, and non-English speaking and culturally diverse consumers.

My Aged Care Gateway

ECCV applauds the Commonwealth Government's objective to make it easier for frail, older people and their carers to access information on ageing and aged care, have their needs assessed, and be supported to locate and access services available to them through the My Aged Care Gateway.

However, ECCV stresses that many multicultural seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds will not access services directly through the My Aged Care call centre or website due to issues of connectivity, language and computer literacy. ECCV notes that seniors from a non-English speaking background tend to feel less comfortable to access aged care services online or via the phone. Further, ECCV emphasises that older people from non-English speaking backgrounds have lower rates of internet connection at home than older Anglo-Australians, except for those from Asian countries (FECCA 2015, 8). There are many older Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds who have no internet connection, live alone, and have need for assistance (FECCA 2015, 8).

Further, ECCV underlines that in order to consent to have their personal details registered on the My Aged Care client portal, clients from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds will be required to have implicit trust in the security of the system and a deep understanding of its purpose. This is particularly pertinent for clients who have lived under repressive and authoritarian regimes.

ECCV suggests the development of resources that facilitate access for seniors from a non-English speaking background to services, particularly for those who due to issues of language, literacy, and trust will not access services via the My Aged Care Gateway. Such resources need to be customised to a variety of multicultural communities and their preferences and ECCV highlights that the cultural competence and existing community partnerships that ethno-specific and multicultural service providers have can assist in this regard.

Recommendation 7

That the Commonwealth Government resource community organisations, including ethno-specific and multicultural organisations, to deliver community education programs and capacity building initiatives around the MAC Gateway for consumers and service providers.

Recommendation 8

That the Commonwealth Government resource culturally and linguistically appropriate information dissemination initiatives about the MAC Gateway and CHSP.

Recommendation 9

That the Australian Government resource ethno-specific and multicultural aged care agencies to link and refer non-English speaking and culturally diverse clients to the MAC Gateway.

Recommendation 10

That consumers who do not consent to have their personal details registered in the MAC Gateway due to issues of trust are still able to access the services they require.

Culturally appropriate screening and assessment

In commending the Australian Government's commitment to deliver "Client Centred Assessment and Care", ECCV underlines the importance of guaranteeing culturally appropriate face to face assessment for older consumers from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds within the CHSP and MAC Gateway.

Comprehensive and culturally appropriate face to face assessment is required to identify a person's residual functional capabilities, limitations, and possibility of or potential for, functional improvement in order to plan and deliver the most appropriate support options. With clients from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds, the assessment process often requires extra time and assistance. ECCV stresses that trusted bilingual and bicultural workers, such as Access and Support officers and case managers, are often needed for support and advocacy throughout the assessment process.

Recommendation 11

That flexible models should be implemented for culturally specific RAS through partnerships or sub-contracting arrangements with local specialist organisations and their accredited assessors.

Recommendation 12

That compulsory cultural competency training modules be implemented for RAS and MAC officers and that a nationally standardised framework for working with clients from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds be established.

Recommendation 13

That clarification regarding the CHSP Case Management service and the eligibility criteria for the service be available for clients at the first point of contact and throughout the lengthy and often confusing service pathway.

Language services

ECCV notes that higher levels of English language ability are associated with better health, wellbeing and better social inclusion outcomes. Research (FECCA 2015, 10) identifies a need for information to be available in the language of older people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds, and for access to professional interpreters when required.

In some cases translated materials may not be understood if literacy in a person's first language is poor and differing cultural practices and norms result in the need for culturally appropriate translations (FECCA 2015, 15). Additionally, a lack of awareness of available support services can lead to underutilisation by older people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds (FECCA 2015, 14). Language and cultural barriers also play a role in the management of health conditions, including self-management, medication management, and communicating with doctors (FECCA 2015, 15).

ECCV notes that the CHSP Manual does not clearly outline the availability of language services and the process for accessing language services. ECCV stresses that the Victorian HACC Language Services Credit Line is vital to facilitate access of seniors from a non-English speaking background to aged care services. Members of the ethnic and multicultural community aged care sector in Victoria have expressed concerns that agencies that work with clients from a non-English speaking background will not be able to access the HACC Language Services Credit Line under the CHSP. Multicultural aged care agencies are concerned that a lack of targeted HACC funding for interpreting and translating services will place seniors from a non-English speaking background at a serious disadvantage, and lessen their opportunities to maintain their independence and links to the community.

ECCV's consultations also raised concerns about:

- Increased demand on the TIS language service and its capacity to provide adequate and timely supply of translating and interpreting services.
- Lack of secondary translating and interpreting services in situations where TIS are unable to meet client needs.
- The 'capping' of language services acting as a disincentive for generic organisations to access language services and disadvantaging organisations that are responsive to clients' language needs.

ECCV believes that bilingual and bicultural nurses and care staff from non-English speaking backgrounds bring valuable diversity skills to the aged care industry. There is a growing untapped market of multicultural Victorians who are attracted to targeted aged care training programs delivered through certified Registered Training Organisations in ethnic and multicultural agencies. ECCV suggests facilitating aged care training opportunities for people from non-English speaking backgrounds, particularly for those from new and emerging communities, to build a workforce that will be capable of responding to the linguistic and cultural needs of the entire older population.

Recommendation 14

That the Commonwealth Government implement a subsidy like the Victorian HACC Language Services Credit Line within the CHSP for interpreting and translating services.

Recommendation 15

That the Federal Government provide incentives for the recruitment, training and retention of bilingual and bicultural aged care staff, particularly from new and emerging communities, within the CHSP.

Recommendation 16

That the Commonwealth Government provide and make available information in diverse community languages and ensure that printed translations are culturally relevant and of a high standard.

National Fees Policy

Research (FECCA 2015, 15) shows that in comparison to older people from English speaking backgrounds, older migrants from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds have an increased risk of poverty and less superannuation savings. ECCV's estimates indicate that the majority of those receiving full aged pensions in Victoria are from non-English speaking backgrounds and that a larger proportion of the clients of ethno-specific and multicultural services in Victoria are full pensioners.

ECCV notes that the transition from block funding to individualised funding will impact more greatly on smaller ethno-specific and multicultural services that have a large proportion of full pensioners and that do not have sufficient reserve funds to cover running costs. ECCV also stresses that fees often deter older people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds from receiving the aged care services that they require. ECCV believes that discontinuing services for clients who are unable or unwilling to afford the fees proposed under the CHSP is an unreasonable risk.

Further, ECCV reinforces that many clients from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds require outreach services that link them to supports and social engagement programs, such as Planned Activity Groups, and that these services and programs do not appropriately fit the individual funding model.

Recommendation 17

That the Commonwealth Government apply block funding models to smaller organisations, particularly specialist providers such as ethno-specific and multicultural aged care agencies.

Recommendation 18

That the Commonwealth Government apply block funding for ethno-specific community outreach services and group social engagement activities.

Recommendation 19

That the National Fees Policy provide explicit guidance for service providers in relation to debt management.

References

Australian Government Productivity Commission, *Caring for Older Australians*. 2011

FECCA, *Review of Research on Older People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*.

2015

ECCV, *Multicultural Aged Care Strategy*. 2014

http://www.eccv.org.au/library/ECCV%27s_Multicultural_Aged_Care_Strategy.pdf

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