



**ethnic  
communities'  
council of  
victoria**

**Patron**

The Right Hon Malcolm Fraser AC, CH,  
former Prime Minister of Australia

**ECCV RESPONSE  
TO  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
ON  
MINISTERIAL ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION  
ON  
VICTORIAN DEMENTIA ACTION PLAN**

**February 2014**

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) welcomes the opportunity to present a response to the Department of Health on the Victorian dementia action plan following the Ministerial Round Table Discussion on 22 November 2013.

**Background to ECCV**

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the peak body for ethnic and multicultural organisations in Victoria. It is a community based, member-driven organisation committed to empowering people from diverse and multicultural communities in Victoria. Since 1974, the ECCV has advocated and lobbied local, state and federal governments on behalf of multicultural communities in areas like aged care and ageing, human rights and justice, access and equity, racism and discrimination, community harmony, employment and education, health and community services, and arts and culture.

**Dementia Services**

Dementia services are often underutilised by seniors from a non-English speaking background. Dementia may be seen in some communities as a normal part of ageing or even a form of madness rather than a disease. Stigma is a major barrier to people from a non-English speaking background as people may have feelings of shame and deny their condition. Consequently dementia is often diagnosed at a more advanced stage when people reach a crisis point. ECCV's Discussion Paper *MEANT TO CARE about culturally relevant dementia care* highlighted that people from a culturally diverse background underutilise dementia services due to:

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- Varying levels of English
- Lack of knowledge
- Cultural perceptions and stigma
- Experience of discrimination with health services
- Lack of culturally appropriate services.

In order to reduce costs in health care it is vital to raise awareness of dementia in multicultural communities. ECCV believes that educating communities on the notion of dementia and inform them on how to access dementia services would lead to more timely diagnosis of dementia in multicultural communities.

**Recommendation 1**

That the Victorian Government facilitates the uptake of dementia services in culturally and linguistically diverse communities in particular through community education initiatives. It is vital that these initiatives respond to the culturally, linguistically, and spiritually diverse preferences and needs of multicultural communities.

**Multicultural engagement**

Seniors from a non-English speaking background often revert to their mother tongue when ageing. Ethno-specific organisations play a key role in delivering services that meet the needs of Victoria's culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Ethno-specific residential care facilities run dementia units that deliver vital culturally responsive dementia services to their community. Further, ethnic and multicultural seniors club are an important platform to engage with seniors from a non-English speaking background. It is important that seniors and their families from multicultural communities can express their views on dementia, and what issues they encounter when accessing dementia services. ECCV is aware that also younger people are living with dementia. However, due to stigma they would be reluctant to speak openly about their condition. It is important to engage with younger people from culturally diverse communities to ensure that they access available services.

**Recommendation 2**

That the Victorian Government includes ethno-specific providers in the consultation process on the dementia action plan.

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**Recommendation 3**

That the Victorian Government includes seniors from a non-English speaking background who are living with dementia, their families and carers in the consultation process. ECCV recommends engaging with multicultural seniors clubs.

**Recommendation 4**

That the Victorian Government works in collaboration with ethnic and multicultural organisations to develop strategies to facilitate access of younger culturally diverse people living with dementia to services.

**Research**

ECCV emphasises that there is little evidence-based research on people living with dementia in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. ECCV welcomes the RDNS research into improving access of culturally and linguistically diverse communities to dementia care.

**Recommendation 5**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government facilitates evidence-based research on people living with dementia from culturally diverse communities. ECCV emphasises that it is vital to engage multicultural communities in the research process.

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