ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria

Directions in 21st Century Diversity

More than cosmetic. More than a commodity.

State Government Submission
2010 – 2011

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) Inc. was established in 1974 as a voluntary community based organisation.

Over 35 years later, ECCV is a broadly based, statewide, peak advocacy body representing ethnic and multicultural communities in Victoria.

ECCV's role includes supporting, consulting, liaising with and providing information to Victoria's ethnic communities.

ECCV delivers policy projects for key partners in areas like multicultural policy, aged care programs and skilled migration strategies.

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Foreword

It's hard to believe that ten years have passed since the year 2000. To say that the past decade was a period of momentous change would be an understatement.   From the economic and environmental to the socio-cultural and geo-political, it is difficult to remember a similar timeframe punctuated by such a convergence of historic events. There has been terrorism and tsunamis, global warming and the global economic crisis, all of which have taken their toll on the confidence and trust of many in our society. On a brighter note, there have been stunning landmarks in race relations and reconciliation and a defiant sense of possibility in a brighter, fairer and more ecologically sustainable future for all.

It is in this spirit of forward thinking that ECCV presents this state government submission for the 2010-11 financial year. As we enter 2010 there is a wide variety of issues facing our 21st Century communities and the many organisations that serve and support them. This document provides a brief overview of each issue and key points for consideration in terms of implications and responses.

One of the pressing priorities will be to emphasise the commonality that exists in our diversity and the kinship that binds our multilingual, multi-faith and multicultural society. It is a theme that can easily be forgotten in the scramble to assert independence and differentiation, and one that will be increasingly crucial to redress some of the experiences of marginalisation and disenfranchisement that have dogged some of our most vulnerable groups in recent years.

ECCV will also continue to pursue greater autonomy and sustainability for the community sector. With the respective jurisdictions and accountability of various levels of government and bureaucracy set for greater scrutiny and review, it is clear that community organisations will become more and more indispensible in their capacity as service deliverers and independent voices of the people.

Significant shifts in population, demography and economic responsibility mean the challenges ahead are many for all of us. Close and constant consultation between governments and stakeholder organisations like ECCV will be increasingly crucial if we are to achieve the sort of cultural diversity that goes beyond the cosmetic and commodified; the kind of harmonious and equitable society to which we all aspire.

On that note, I commend the following submission for considered attention and discussion.

Sam Afra JP
Chairperson
Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria

Executive Summary

ECCV has always devoted considerable time and energy to the pre-emption of prevailing trends as they relate to the migrant, multicultural and broader communities of Victoria. With the state entering the second decade of the new millennium, the need for this kind of foresight and pro-activity is more pertinent than ever. Notable changes have been made, and are set to be made, in key policy areas such as immigration, acceptance and resettlement of asylum seekers, and the interplay between democratic freedoms and societal protections according to state, national and international charters, laws and standards of behaviour.

In response, ECCV, in consultation with its members, project partners and key stakeholders, has analysed projected issues and implications and devised suggested responses and points of consideration.

Key recommendations include :

➤ **Stricter enforcement of Diversity Policies that include specific considerations regarding ethnic and cultural background, linguistic ability and religious affiliation of job applicants, employees and clients.**

➤ **More meaningful sanctions imposed on media outlets who unfairly portray migrant and multicultural communities in their reports.**

➤ **Consideration be given to an identity crimes unit established within Victoria Police to ensure investigations are able to recognise and respond accordingly to anti-social incidents of perceived racial or religious vilification.**

➤ **The Victorian Government's Office of the Community Sector (OCS) be extended indefinitely to ensure the relationship between the community sector and government continues to develop fruitfully.**

➤ **Development of a national curriculum for the public and private school sectors that helps teach children to :**

  – **find the commonality in plurality**

  – **respect all cultures**

  – **to appreciate the positive contribution migrants make to Australia.**

➤ **Development of better connections between educational institutions, ethnic communities and the business sector regarding opportunities for youth such as volunteering and work-based experiences.**

➤ **Development of culturally responsive mental health initiatives that focus on the destigmatisation, promotion and awareness, prevention and early intervention for CALD seniors.**

➤ **Availability of easy to access, impartial and culturally sensitive advice for newly-arrived migrants on matters such as managing household budgets, sourcing financial assistance, and minimising costs.**

➤ **Consideration be given to reviving a tournament similar to the former All Nations Cup which promoted communal participation by migrant and multicultural groups.**

1.   Confidence and Cohesion among 21ˢᵗ Century Communities

In late 2009, the Scanlon Foundation released a summary report of a comprehensive study into social cohesion.   The summary, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2009*[1] confirmed that most Australians hold a positive opinion of cultural diversity and believe that migration has delivered considerable benefits to the country and its culture. However, it also revealed that challenges persist at the local level to address :

> low esteem among new migrants and refugees and a lack of confidence in Australia as a fair and supportive multicultural society, primarily among residents of lower socio-economic areas

> feelings of mistrust about migrants and refugees among 'mainstream' members of the community.

ECCV recognises that there can be a number of factors that contribute to feelings of suspicion, mistrust, and resentment among individuals and communities about others of a different nationality, race, religion or culture. These can include :

> limited availability of local services, infrastructure, resources and financial support

> general uncertainty about heightening economic pressures and environmental concerns

> competition (perceived or real) for employment and education opportunities and advancement for themselves, their friends or family

> security concerns in an era of high-profile global terrorism

> general confusion, frustration and even discomfort at the rapid pace and fluid nature of social and cultural change in Australia

> a sense of loss for the pride and protection afforded customs and traditions (including established migrant traditions) as they personally remember and cherish them.

In addition, leaders need to recognise there are persistent pockets of racism in Victoria and introduce programs that challenge that racism. With this is mind, ECCV offers the following observations and suggestions.

1.1   Building Esteem among Migrant Groups

More than cosmetic

ECCV notes that in years gone by, cultural diversity tended to be regarded as little more than a source of exotic cuisine, colourful costumes and quaint foreign traditions. In short, appreciation remained largely at the cosmetic level. ECCV recognises that Victoria has been a world leader in fomenting greater recognition of the deeper contribution made by migrant and multicultural groups to the Australian psyche and identity. However, more can always be done to build the esteem of multicultural communities as an integral part of Australian society.

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[1] Markus, A, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2009: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys* , Monash University

Community Sector Support

1.1.1   ECCV believes the establishment of the Office of the Community Sector (OCS) has been a valuable source of support and avenue for feedback to the Victorian Government. Initiatives such as the Portable Long Service Leave provision for the community sector and Standard Charter of Accounts for the not-for-profit sector have been widely appreciated for simplifying and streamlining the administrative burdens upon small ethnic community organisations.

1.1.2   ECCV suggests that the OCS be extended indefinitely to ensure the relationship between the community sector and government continues to develop fruitfully.

Recommendation :

➤ **The Victorian Government's Office of the Community Sector (OCS) be extended indefinitely to ensure the relationship between the community sector and government continues to develop fruitfully.**

Access to Local Services, Community Infrastructure, Resources and Financial Support

1.1.3   ECCV notes that a major obstacle to migrant and multicultural groups gaining a foothold in the local community and feeling accepted and engaged is an inability to access suitable venues for group activities.   Local councils advise that this is due to demand for council venues by community groups exceeding supply. With this in mind, ECCV suggests that :

➤ Greater encouragement of linkages between community groups and sharing of facilities

➤ A minimum quota of seven hours a week set aside for new and emerging communities

➤ Fast-tracking of investment into the expansion of existing venues and construction of new venues.

Financial and household budgeting advice

1.1.4   With the cost of living projected to increase significantly in the coming year, ECCV is particularly concerned about the impact on lower income communities who already report evidence of household stress arising from financial concerns. By providing easy access to impartial and culturally sensitive advice on matters such as managing household budgets, sourcing financial assistance, and minimising costs, valuable esteem and self-determination can be restored to vulnerable families.

Recommendation :

➤ **Availability of easy to access, impartial and culturally sensitive advice on matters such as managing household budgets, sourcing financial assistance, and minimising costs.**

Clearly Defined Diversity Policies

1.1.5   From placements at work and school to representation on the sporting field and in the political arena, individuals from disadvantaged communities frequently have extra difficulty in …

> finding out about and applying for opportunities,

> being considered for opportunities and further advancement.

These barriers, experienced at each stage of the competitive process, are frequently identified as a source of concern and distress by members of migrant and multicultural communities and can be directly attributed to feelings that Australian society is discriminatory.

1.1.6   ECCV notes consistent evidence of the relationship between exposure to discrimination and poor mental health, especially depression. ECCV is particularly concerned about reports of jobseekers facing significant discrimination in the employment application process if they have a non-Anglo Saxon sounding name.

1.1.7   ECCV notes that the Australian Government is still in the process of fleshing out the substance and implementation of its Social Inclusion policy agenda, particularly as it relates to migrant and multicultural communities. ECCV believes it is crucial that the Australian Government give due recognition to the particular barriers to inclusion and advancement experienced by individuals from migrant and multicultural backgrounds.

1.1.8   ECCV notes that many federal government departments and agencies have begun to appoint Diversity Officers and develop Diversity Policies. While commendable, ECCV wishes to ensure that specific considerations are made regarding ethnic and cultural background, linguistic ability and religious affiliation of job applicants, employees and clients.

1.1.9   At state government level, ECCV notes that the Victorian Government has made commendable efforts to redress barriers and inequities encountered by newly-arrived and NESB communities. However, implementation of Diversity Policies has been inconsistent across all areas of government with some departments and agencies proving more effective than others.

1.1.10   ECCV notes that in general, the private sector has been less energetic in devising and implementing viable and meaningful diversity policies for the workplace. Nevertheless, notable exceptions do exist such as the Australian Football League (AFL) which has developed a specific outreach program to attract multicultural communities into the game as players, spectators and administrators and has instituted strict codes of conduct regarding intolerant behaviour. ECCV believes the success of the AFL's cross-cultural focus serves as a useful model to other organisations.

Anti-exploitation and Intimidation Policies

1.1.11   ECCV notes that members of migrant and multicultural communities, especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds, tend to be among the most likely victims of systemic intimidation, coercion and abuse of power in their working lives. While WorkSafe Victoria provides guidance material, support and advice for people who are bullied at work, ECCV calls for extra attention to be paid to combating intimidation of CALD communities.

Media Representation of Multicultural Communities

1.1.12 ECCV notes that within multicultural communities there is a strong sense that the media is unaccountable, a belief borne out by a two year wait before three commercial television channels were found by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to have "… created an unfair presentation, overall of Sudanese people as being particularly prone to commit violence and crime." The finding followed an incident in late 2007.

1.1.13 ECCV calls on the Victorian Government to pressure the Federal Government for more meaningful sanctions to be imposed on media outlets that unfairly portray migrant and multicultural communities in their reports.

Identity Crime

1.1.14 In 2009, the Victorian Government responded to a series of offences against migrants and international students from multicultural backgrounds by :

> ➤ moving to legislate to ensure sentencing laws take into account crimes involving perceived racial or religious vilification; and

> ➤ reviewing laws to determine whether Victoria should create new hate crimes offences.

1.1.15 ECCV welcomed these developments and proposes that Victoria Police establish an identity crimes unit to ensure the police investigating crimes of violence are able to recognise and respond accordingly to anti-social incidents of perceived racial or religious vilification.

Recommendation :

➤ **Public sector Diversity Policies include specific considerations regarding ethnic and cultural background, linguistic ability and religious affiliation of job applicants, employees and clients.**

➤ **More meaningful sanctions be imposed on media outlets who unfairly portray migrant and multicultural communities in their reports.**

➤ **Consideration be given to establishing an identity crimes unit within Victoria Police to ensure investigations are able to recognise and respond accordingly to anti-social incidents of perceived racial or religious vilification.**

1.2 Building Bridges with the Mainstream

1.2.1 In light of the extra pressures brought on by the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), ECCV believes that particular attention must be paid to countering the "Us and Them" mentality that permeates certain approaches to diversity and exacerbates feelings of division between migrant communities and the mainstream. Rather than focusing purely on the differences between peoples, which can result in all people seeing in others is the differences, ECCV proposes strategies and campaigns that highlight similarities, help make allies of potential rivals, and showcase the commonalities that exist across Australia's highly diverse population.

Buddies and Mentorships

1.2.2   While positions in the workplace, on the local council, or in the sporting team are inevitably limited, ECCV encourages the fostering of buddy and mentor relationships, especially with newly-arrived migrants and refugees, as a means to combat misconceptions and strengthen societal ties, as well as develop useful personal and professional skills.

Promoting Similarities and Common Interests

1.2.3   Beyond the nurturing of cross-cultural interpersonal relationships, mutual understanding is also furthered by the bonding impact of common interests at a group level. The remarkable feeling of solidarity inspired by the Socceroos at the last World Cup is a prime example. Fortunately, Australia is involved in the 2010 World Cup which ECCV believes can be leveraged as a platform for building bridges between diverse communities and the mainstream.

Recommendation :

➤ **Foster the development of buddy and mentor relationships, especially with newly-arrived migrants and refugees, as a means to develop useful personal and professional skills, combat misconceptions and strengthen societal ties**

➤ **Leverage the enthusiasm generated by major international sporting events in 2010 such as the Soccer World Cup present excellent opportunities to build bridges between diverse communities and the mainstream.**

1.3   Community Safety

1.3.1   ECCV notes that community safety has become a prime concern in the wake of a spate of incidents against individuals from migrant and multicultural backgrounds. As well as strengthening the presence and powers of police, ECCV is eager to see policy progress in addressing the contributing factors that frequently lead to anti-social and disorderly behaviour, such as inappropriate use of alcohol.

Alcohol

1.3.2   ECCV recognises that the young in particular are highly susceptible to the influence of alcohol advertising and believes that consideration should be given to the same restrictions as are currently in place for the tobacco industry and the advertising of cigarettes.

1.3.3   ECCV also urges local councils to introduce stricter monitoring of the use of community venues for activities. For example, some councils employ the PartySafe initiative whereby parents are required to register their party with PartySafe as a condition for hiring council managed facilities. Once registered, local police will work with the organisers to ensure that the party is safe. Police will provide a PartySafe Information Kit that contains information on strategies that will assist in making the party safe. They will also arrange a time that suits the party organisers to drive by and check on the party.

1.3.4   ECCV suggests the PartySafe initiative be expanded to all councils and the information kit be available in languages other than English.

Recommendation :

➤ **Consideration be given to introducing the same restrictions on the advertising of alcohol as are currently in place for the tobacco industry and the advertising of cigarettes.**

➤ **The PartySafe initiative be expanded to all councils and the information kit be available in languages other than English.**

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2. Education and CALD Public Awareness Campaigns

ECCV has long recognised the importance of education to the success of a dynamic, diverse democracy. In terms of serving the specific needs of migrant and multicultural communities and furthering the potential of Australia's diverse society, education can be summarised under the following categories :

➤ mainstream scholastic education and training

➤ community language schools

➤ international students

➤ general public education campaigns.

In all respects, a series of highly-charged public incidents has drawn attention to issues that ECCV believe are long overdue for action on the part of governments, community leaders, and service providers.

2.1 Mainstream scholastic education and training

As noted above, the educational concerns of culturally and linguistically diverse communities have become a flashpoint of social, political, commercial and academic debate in the past year. Whilst acknowledging the urgency of some of the circumstances fueling that discussion, ECCV is also aware of other issues that exist within each level of the formal educational system.

Primary level

2.1.1 ECCV believes that positive attitudes toward diversity begins at a young age, and one of the most effective methods for nurturing a healthy curiosity in other cultures and countering prejudicial stereotypes is to promote regular and meaningful interaction.

2.1.2 To assist in this objective, ECCV recognises that teachers and school administrators often require resources to augment their own knowledge and ensure the information passed on to students is accurate and culturally sensitive.

2.1.3 As well as providing in-class material on diverse cultures, ECCV believes that extra-curricular activities are a valuable means for developing healthy cross-cultural ties. As an active supporter of Harmony Day and Cultural Diversity Week, ECCV encourages all primary schools, public and private, to consider some form of event or activity which promotes a positive participatory approach to life in a dynamic multicultural society, either as part of the above or in support of events like the 2010 Soccer World Cup that showcase different cultures within a common context.

Public sector

2.1.4 Overall, ECCV suggests the development of a national curriculum that helps teach children to

➤ find the commonality in plurality

➤ respect all cultures and

➤ to appreciate the positive contribution migrants make to Australia.

2.1.5   Within this curriculum, ECCV also proposes an element which gives children a cursory awareness of various religious holidays and customs, bearing in mind the wishes of parents. Importantly, ECCV does not believe this information should extend to observance or any study of religious texts.

Private Sector

2.1.6   ECCV also proposes that a similar cross-cultural awareness program be implemented within the curriculum of the private school system, bearing in mind the wishes of parents and administrators. If more preferable, ECCV suggests that activities be scheduled involving students from other schools of different faiths.

Recommendation :

➤ **Development of a national curriculum for the public and private school sectors that helps teach children to :**

  – **find the commonality in plurality**

  – **respect all cultures**

  – **to appreciate the positive contribution migrants make to Australia.**

➤ **Inclusion of an element which gives children a cursory awareness of various religious holidays and customs, bearing in mind the wishes of parents.**

➤ **Provision of resources to teachers and school administrators to ensure the cultural information passed on to students is accurate and culturally sensitive.**

Secondary level

2.1.7   As children pass through adolescence and make the transition into young adulthood, schools become a vital forum for accessing a broader variety of ideas and perspectives and developing a more informed understanding of alternative interests, customs and lifestyles. With this in mind, ECCV believes a continuation and expansion of the aforementioned cross-cultural awareness program should be considered as part of the secondary school curriculum.

2.1.8   ECCV also believes that secondary school students will be more likely to embrace the learning of a language other than English (LOTE) if a more co-ordinated campaign of incentives was developed. For example, the offer of scholarships and subsidies for students wishing to further their LOTE abroad.

Recommendation :

➤ **Continuation and expansion of a primary school program that helps teach children to**

– **find the commonality in plurality**

– **respect all cultures**

– **to appreciate the positive contribution migrants make to Australia.**

➤ **Development of a more co-ordinated campaign of LOTE study incentives, such as scholarships and subsidies for overseas studies.**

Tertiary level

2.1.9   By the time a student reaches tertiary education, whether university or TAFE, interest in cultural, religious and linguistic diversity tends to be highly personalised and specialised. Yet ECCV is aware of a number of issues at tertiary level that warrant examination, including :

➤ Cutbacks to University courses in languages other than English (LOTE)

➤ Limited career pathways for multilingual Victorians

Cutbacks to University Courses in Languages Other Than English (LOTE)

2.1.10 In 2009, the Australian Government's National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) set a 2020 timeline for one in eight Australian students exiting Year 12 with sufficient fluency in a language such as Mandarin and Japanese. However, these are two of the languages affected by cutbacks to Victoria University's foreign language program.

2.1.11 While appreciative of the financial pressures faced by tertiary institutions in the current financial climate, ECCV is concerned the trend among tertiary institutions to downsize and amalgamate LOTE courses runs counter to the idea of Victoria (and more broadly Australia) as a globalised nation. ECCV believes a concerted effort needs to be made by governments and academia to promote and nurture LOTE studies.

Recommendation :

➤ **A concerted effort by governments and academia to better promote and nurture LOTE studies.**

Limited Career Pathways for Multilingual Victorians

2.1.12 ECCV also notes a frustration expressed by multilingual Victorians, including LOTE students, about limited career options and pathways that fully utilise their unique skills both within the public and private sectors.

2.1.13   While various scholarships are being offered to train new interpreters and translators, particularly in new and emerging languages, ECCV is aware that few interpreters or translators earn an annual income sufficient to sustain an appropriate standard of living.   As a consequence, the teaching and learning of LOTE is considered more of a personal hobby rather than a viable career option.

2.1.14   ECCV believes that the great potential that multilingualism can provide to business and government can be better realised by tertiary institutions and potential employers forming connections and developing pathways for multilingual Victorians interested in using their skills in their careers.

Recommendation :

➢ **Forging of stronger connections and professional partnerships between tertiary institutions and potential employers to develop pathways for multilingual Victoria's interested in using their skills in their careers.**

2.2   Community Language Schools

2.2.1   ECCV notes that Victoria's Community Languages Schools play a major role in delivering the State Government's policies in education and multicultural affairs.   Under current funding arrangements, Community Language Schools receive $120 per capita funding per student. $4.00 of this amount is provided to Ethnic Schools Association of Victoria (ESAV) – Community Languages Australia (CLA) to cover public insurance and product insurance and assistance with administration costs.

2.2.2   The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) provides:

➤ $120 per capita funding

➤ $225 000 for teacher training courses

➤ $50 000 for professional development

➤ $50000 administration costs for a shared staff member DEECD and ESAV at LMERC. This amount covers part of one office position.

2.2.3   According to data collected by DEECD, approximately 55-60% of the per capital funding is returned to Government and other jurisdictional schools in the form of rent or room hire. With the costs of rental continuing to grow, ECCV suggests the following initiatives to assist community language schools to meet their charter:

➤ Continuation of funding through the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) to assist schools with developing materials

➤ An increase in per capita funding from $120 per student to $160 to assist with rental costs

➤ $100,000 in funding to introduce technology into community language schools.

Recommendation :

➤ **Continuation of funding through the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) to assist schools with developing materials.**

➤ **An increase in per capita funding from $120 per student to $160 to assist with rental costs.**

➤ **$100,000 in funding to introduce technology into community languages schools.**

2.3   International Students

2.3.1   Victoria has a proud record of being a prime destination for international students. Nevertheless, ECCV notes that issues affecting international students in Victoria which have become headline news, nationally and internationally over the past 12 months have been building up for considerable time.

2.3.2   First and foremost, ECCV is concerned that too much emphasis is placed on the 'economic benefits' of international students, leaving many students feeling little more than tradable commodities rather than valued human beings. For instance, the repeated reference to the financial windfall or loss of the international student populace is being likened to a form of racism, which is helping to fuel an undercurrent of discontent about the treatment of migrant and multicultural communities.

2.3.3   ECCV urges politicians and policy makers to ensure their rhetoric iterates that international students are welcome and appreciated for more than their economic value.

Recommendation :

➤ **Politicians and policy makers ensure their rhetoric iterates that international students are welcome and appreciated for more than their economic value.**

Travel concessions

2.3.4   In 2007, ECCV was part of the coalition calling on the Victorian Government to institute travel concessions for international students. At the time, the Victorian Government upheld their decision not to extend concessions to international students, creating an exemption from the Equal Opportunity Act. With overseas enrolments in Victorian Universities dropping markedly in the wake of recent violent incidents, ECCV urges the Victorian Government to consider revisiting that decision.

Access to public libraries

2.3.5   ECCV is also aware of the effect that cutbacks to public library services have had on students, such as :

> ➤ reduced hours in which to access collections and assistance

> ➤ reduced ability to reserve material for future study

> ➤ reduced access to library facilities

2.3.6   ECCV calls upon the Victorian Government to reconsider funding priorities to ensure that state and local libraries receive sufficient funding to sustain a desired level of service.

Student Accommodation

2.3.7   Similarly, concerns over the quantity and quality of student accommodation have been mounting as increased numbers of international students were not matched by increased housing. ECCV calls upon all tertiary institutions to ensure the provision of adequate accommodation for existing international students before seeking to increase numbers.

Recommendation :

➤ **The Victorian Government consider revisiting their decision to exempt international students from receiving a travel concession.**

➤ **The Victorian Government reconsider funding priorities to ensure that state and local libraries receive sufficient funding to sustain a desired level of service.**

➤ **Tertiary institutions to ensure the provision of adequate accommodation for existing international students before seeking to increase numbers.**

2.4   CALD Public Awareness Campaigns

ECCV believes that beyond the formal education sphere, there is a need to improve the manner in which information about prevailing issues is distributed to migrant and multicultural communities, and incorporates their particular concerns and sensitivities.

In the coming months, major initiatives and campaigns are set to roll out, including :

> ➤ sustainable management of natural resources

> ➤ new technologies such as digital media

> ➤ federal and state elections.

Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

2.4.1   ECCV has already been involved in local campaigns to promote energy efficiency to migrant and multicultural households. With a national campaign targeting lower socio-economic households set to begin in 2010, it is crucial that information and assistance be available to families from newly-arrived and non-English speaking backgrounds.

New Technologies such as Digital Media

2.4.2   Similarly, 2010 also marks a significant step in Australia's technological environment with Mildura set to be the first region in Australia to be switched from the current analog media platform to a fully-digitised system. ECCV notes that as Mildura is home to a growing number of families from new and emerging backgrounds, due consideration must be given to ensuring all education about the change is easily accessible and understandable to migrants and multicultural communities.

Federal and State Elections

2.4.3   In recent years, ECCV has collaborated with both the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) on projects to improve the electoral knowledge and accessibility of voters from migrant and multicultural communities. However, greater investment and resourcing is still required to ensure all CALD communities are adequately informed and prepared to participate in the upcoming elections.

Recommendation :

➤ **Specific investment and resources be devoted to ensure that migrant and multicultural communities are informed and prepared for issues relating to :**

   – Sustainable management of natural resources

   – new technologies such as digital media

   – federal and state election.

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3.   Culturally Competent Service Delivery

3.1   Healthcare and Human Services

3.1.1   ECCV notes that the Victorian Departments of Health and Human Services, and their associated agencies such as VicHealth, are devoting considerable time, money, and resources to improving delivery to Victorians from migrant and multicultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, ECCV is aware of certain issues that require specific attention.

Transitional Care for CALD clients

3.1.2   ECCV is aware of reports by CALD clients experiencing transitional difficulties after leaving hospital, particularly but not exclusively, among older members of the community. Limited access to culturally competent assistance has complicated the safe return home and occasionally resulted in clients having to be readmitted to hospital.

3.1.3   ECCV suggests that particular attention be paid to investigating possible shortfalls in this area.

Maternity Advice and Support

3.1.4   ECCV also notes a spike in pregnancy rates among Victoria's newest ethnic communities, such as those from the Thai / Burma region, soon after resettlement as women embrace the opportunity to begin families in a safe environment. This can create problems for clinics and hospitals due to a shortage of culturally-competent staff linguistically equipped in these new languages.

3.1.5   ECCV suggests urgent attention be paid to improving the capacity of maternity staff at clinics and hospitals to handle the needs of mothers from the newest migrant and refugee communities.

Recommendation :

➤ **Investigations be undertaken into the availability and suitability of transitional care for CALD clients exiting hospital.**

➤ **Urgent attention be paid to improving the capacity of maternity staff at clinics and hospitals to handle the needs of mothers from the newest migrant and refugee communities.**

3.2   CALD Disability Services

Residential Care

3.2.1   ECCV notes that in 2008 the Australian Government announced a $100 million Commonwealth grant aimed at relieving an accommodation crisis for the severely disabled. However, in February 2010 it was reported that only 20% of the targeted 300 residential care beds had been opened.

3.2.2   ECCV urges the Australian Government to work with the State Governments to hasten progress on this important initiative and ensure that disabled Australians from CALD backgrounds are among the beneficiaries of the increased number of residential care beds.

Employment

3.2.3   ECCV notes that people from NESB with disability are largely invisible. According to sector estimates, they are:

> ➤   Approximately half as likely to be in the labour force as English speaking background people with disability.

> ➤   Are three times less likely to utilise a government funded disability employment support service than a person from an English speaking background.

3.2.4   ECCV notes the release of the Australian Government's *National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy* in late 2009, which sets out a number of priority actions to assist Australians with disability, including mental illness, into work. The report reiterates the importance of education and training as a pathway to sustainable employment, and the role of employers in increasing employment opportunities for CALD people with disability.

3.2.5   ECCV urges the Australian Government to collaborate with State Governments and the private sector to bring these recommendations to fruition.

Recommendation :

➤   **The Australian Government work with State Governments to hasten progress on the opening of 300 new residential care beds for the severely disabled and ensure that disabled Australians from CALD backgrounds are among the beneficiaries of the increase.**

➤   **The Australian Government collaborate with State Governments and the private sector to further education and training as a pathway to sustainable employment and an increase employment opportunities for CALD people with a disability.**

3.3   Public Housing

3.3.1   ECCV notes that low-income and socially disadvantaged communities such as refugees are among the most disadvantaged when it comes to accessing safe and affordable accommodation to meet their most basic needs. For this segment of the population, securing suitable, safe and affordable accommodation is a particularly important part of their settlement process.

3.3.2   ECCV urges city planners to abandon design and density concepts based on 20th century population and lifestyle expectations and adopt more pre-emptive strategies that will meet future housing needs before they arise.

Recommendation :

The Victorian Government give consideration to :

➤ **providing improved transitional and crises accommodation for those who are at risk of homelessness including refugee women and unaccompanied youth;**

➤ **construct suitably designed housing of sufficient size to accommodate large refugee families;**

➤ **improve security at high-rise social housing estates;**

➤ **give careful a consideration of the limitations in regional Victoria for these communities when accessing appropriate social support services and public transport.**

3.4   Interpreting and Translating

3.4.1   ECCV notes that the Victorian Government is currently undertaking a review of many aspects of the provision of interpreters in Victoria in the form of a Workforce Development Strategy Analysis.

3.4.2   When the Workforce Development Strategy Analysis report is released, ECCV calls on the Victorian Government to resource the interpreting and translating profession in line with the recommendations made.

Recommendation :

➤ **The Victorian Government resource the interpreting and translating profession in line with the recommendations made in the impending Workforce Development Strategy Analysis report.**

3.5   Regional Support

3.5.1   ECCV notes that the state's rural and regional centres have increasingly become a prime destination for migrants, newly-arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants. While this trend has helped to address declining populations in some rural communities, it has often overstretched the capacity of agencies and service providers to meet the needs of migrants and multicultural communities. To assist these concerns, ECCV proposes a number of initiatives.

Advance Preparation on a Case-by-Case Basis

3.5.2   ECCV notes that many refugees arrive in regional centres with special needs that require particular knowledge, skills and additional resources. However, specifics of these requirements are not always conveyed to receiving communities so that they are adequately prepared. ECCV suggests that local agencies and service providers be given advance warning of particular needs of new arrivals as part of the resettlement process.

Bulk-Billing Doctors

3.5.2   Due to a shortage of medical practitioners offering bulk-billing, ECCV suggests consideration be given to mandating a minimum quota of bulk billing doctors per local government area.

Planning Approval Caveats

3.5.3   As part of the planning approval process for new businesses, applicants be required to set employment quotas or commit to an employment policy that quantifies employing a proportion of personnel from diverse backgrounds.

Recommendation :

➤ **Local agencies and service providers be given advance warning of particular needs of new arrivals as part of the resettlement process.**

➤ **Consideration be given to mandating a minimum quota of bulk billing doctors per local government area.**

➤ **New businesses applying for planning permits be required to set employment quotas or commit to an employment policy that quantifies employing a proportion of personnel from diverse backgrounds.**

3.6   Small Business Support and Advice

3.6.1   Despite migrants owning and running a significant proportion of small businesses in Victoria, ECCV notes that the quantity of quality of resources and assistance available to people from non-English speaking backgrounds remains insufficient.

3.6.2   ECCV is particularly concerned by the tendency of Small Business Victoria to rely on their website as the primary source of information and guidance when the access to, and familiarity with, the internet is limited among migrant and multicultural communities, especially those who are newly-arrived and non-English speaking.

3.6.3   ECCV suggests an expansion of public events like the Growing a Multicultural Small Business forum, including to regional areas, to improve the face-to-face accessibility of information-seekers and information-providers.

Recommendation :

➤ **An expansion of public events like the Growing a Multicultural Small Business forum, including to regional areas, to improve the face-to-face accessibility of information-seekers and information-providers.**

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4.   Immigration and Refugee Resettlement

While policies regarding migration and refugee intakes are predominantly a federal concern, ECCV maintains a close interest in the formulation and outcome of decisions with a direct impact on the lives of Victorians. For example, the State Specific Regional Migration program (SSRM) enables state and territory governments to influence the number and profile of skilled migrants settling in their areas.

4.1   Skilled Migration

More than a Commodity

4.1.1   Victoria has a proud record as being a destination of choice for skilled migrants. However, ECCV is wary that too much emphasis on the 'economic benefits' of migration has left many migrants feeling little more than tradable commodities rather than valued human beings. Repeatedly making reference to migrants from certain backgrounds from a purely financial standpoint is being likened to a form of racism and fueling an undercurrent of disenchantment about attitudes toward migrant and multicultural communities.

4.1.2   ECCV urges politicians and policy makers to ensure their rhetoric iterates that migrants are welcome and appreciated for more than their economic value.

Recommendation :

➤ **Politicians and policy makers ensure their rhetoric iterates that migrants are welcome and appreciated for more than their economic value.**

4.2 Secondary Migration

4.2.1   ECCV notes that one of the top concerns for resettlement agencies and service providers is the phenomenon of Secondary Migration, whereby recently-arrived migrants and refugees voluntarily relocate from one municipal centre to another. A common example is a shift from an initial settlement point in metropolitan Melbourne to a township in regional Victoria.

4.2.2   Current systems for documenting population growth do not adequately track the internal movement of migrant and refugees once they have been settled in the country. As a consequence, the data used by government agencies and funding bodies to determine the allocation of finances and resources is inaccurate and outdated.

4.2.3   ECCV is advised that infrastructure planning designed to service migrant and multicultural communities would be better if based upon projected populations two to five years ahead, rather than current records.

Recommendation :

➤ **Infrastructure planning designed to service migrant and multicultural communities be based upon projected populations two to five years ahead, rather than current population records which tend to be inaccurate and outdated.**

4.3   Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants

4.3.1   ECCV notes that the needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants tend to be more immediate, their challenges more severe and specialised, and the scale of adjustment to life in a dynamic, multicultural society more dramatic.

4.3.2   ECCV notes that many aspects of Australia's refugee policy regarding prioritisation of needs and determination of timeframes, are based on the knowledge and life experiences of previous generations of refugees whose countries of origin differ markedly from the countries of current refugees. For example, Vietnamese refugees who arrived in the 1970s were far more familiar with the basics of Western lifestyle than current refugees from countries in Africa or rural Afghanistan.

4.3.3   With this in mind, ECCV suggests that some flexibility be encompassed in terms of needs assessments and service delivery to better reflect the unique needs of the individual.

4.3.4   ECCV also believes that greater financial support needs to be made available to community organisations that assist asylum seekers to function in society.

Recommendation :

➤ **Greater flexibility be encompassed in terms of needs assessments and service delivery to better reflect the unique needs of the individual.**

➤ **Greater financial support for community organisations that provide grassroots assistance to asylum seekers to become established in their daily life.**

Victorian Refugee Recognition Record (VRRR)

4.3.5   ECCV notes that the Victorian Refugee Recognition Record (VRRR) provides a valuable opportunity to celebrate and document the diverse contributions made by refugees.

4.3.6   ECCV suggests that the positive image created by the VRRR could be further enhanced by including award winners in a Premier's or Governor's Australia Day Citizenship ceremony.

Recommendation :

➤ **Consideration be given to inviting VRRR award winners to the Premier's or Governor's Australia Day Citizenship ceremony.**

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5. New and Emerging Communities

With each new generation of migrants, it is the new and emerging communities that represent the sharp end when it comes to issues of concern. Indeed, it is Australia's most newly arrived communities that best epitomise the look, sound, smell, texture and taste of 21st Century diversity and serve as a vital barometer of how successfully or unsuccessfully the issues of cohabitation and interdependence are being pre-empted and addressed.

In this respect, there is a myriad of issues which have been identified, some with suggested responses that begin well before arrival and settlement in Australia.

5.1 Recognition

Recognition of Overseas Qualifications

5.1.1   ECCV notes that recognition of overseas qualifications remains an ongoing issue for new and emerging communities. Among the specific points of concern are:

> ➢ Inadequate funding and resourcing to provide assessment and information to the growing numbers of clients seeking assistance.

> ➢ Insufficient access to ongoing face-to-face vocational / career advice for clients beyond the overseas qualification assessment process. With clients predominantly holders of humanitarian, refugee, spouse visas, availability of ongoing one-to-one help is crucial, especially when providing guidance on how to get into the workforce rather than opting for further study.

> ➢ Need for personal advocacy on behalf of clients who may experience problems getting registered for employment in their occupation despite their qualifications being recognised.

> ➢ Closer relationships with professional bodies and registering authorities to assist in understanding the issues and difficulties facing overseas qualified professionals.

<u>**Recommendation**</u> **:**

> ➢ **Greater investment in the assessment of overseas qualifications to ensure assessments are completed in a swift and culturally sensitive manner, as well as greater resourcing of ongoing face-to-face support and advocacy of clients in need.**

Premier's Receptions

5.1.2   ECCV notes that each year the Office of the Premier (OTP) hosts four formal receptions each year to recognise a particular ethnic community. ECCV believes these occasions do much to foster goodwill and instil a sense of acceptance and belonging within the Victorian community.

5.1.3   ECCV suggests that consideration be given to guaranteeing that each year, at least one out of the four receptions be reserved for a new and emerging community.

Recommendation :

➤ **At least one out of the four Premier's receptions for ethnic communities be reserved for a new and emerging community.**

5.2   Representation

5.2.1   With an increasing proportion of migrants to Victoria coming from new and emerging communities, ECCV believes it is essential that a commensurate proportion of representatives on Victorian Government advisory staff and committees on CALD issues also come from new and emerging communities.

5.2.2   ECCV notes that the Australian Tax Office (ATO) currently runs a short-term work experience program for newly-arrived migrants to help them gain experience and valuable references within an Australian workplace environment. ECCV believes Victorian Government departments should also consider implementing a similar program for newly-arrived Victorians.

Recommendation :

➤ **A commensurate proportion of representatives on Victorian Government advisory staff and committees on CALD issues come from new and emerging communities.**

➤ **Victorian Government departments consider implementing a short-term work experience program for newly-arrived migrants similar to the one currently employed by the Australian Tax Office (ATO).**

Public Awareness Campaign

5.2.3   Among the most common frustrations experienced by members of new and emerging communities is the tendency for mainstream society to automatically associate the terms 'new and emerging' with 'helpless' and 'broken.' It is inaccurate, for example, to presume that all Africans newly arrived in Australia have suffered torture, been denied an education, and are ill-prepared for life in an advanced western society. Contrary to this perception, many are highly qualified, experienced and motivated to do well in their chosen profession and contribute to their new home.

5.2.4   To help confound this preconception, ECCV suggests a concerted public awareness campaign that emphasises the idea that many members of Victoria's new and emerging communities are ready and able to contribute if given the chance.

Recommendation :

➤ **A public awareness campaign to emphasise that many members of Victoria's new and emerging communities are ready and able to contribute if given the chance.**

5.3 Participation

5.3.1 ECCV is aware that many new and emerging communities are experiencing difficulty in accessing council premises such as halls and community centres to host activities and events.

5.3.2 ECCV acknowledges that demand is high for local council premises and facilities. However, ECCV suggests consideration be given to a minimum quota of seven hours per week allocated to groups from new and emerging communities where demand is sufficient.

Recommendation :

➤ **Consideration be given to a minimum quota of seven hours per week allocated to groups from new and emerging communities where demand is sufficient.**

5.4   Resourcing

ECCV notes that availability of, and accessibility to, information and resources remains a constant concern for Victoria's new and emerging communities.

Driver's Education

5.4.1 ECCV is particularly mindful of the need to improve the availability of information, guidance and support in terms of legal rights and responsibilities. One area in urgent need of address concerns the increasing number of new arrivals driving unlicensed.

5.4.2 While ECCV appreciates the specific projects from the Department of Justice (DOJ) targeting new and emerging communities, a special education program is required to better prepare new arrivals for the responsibilities of driving and prevent unnecessary interactions with the justice system.

Recommendation :

➤ **A special education program be developed to better prepare new arrivals for the responsibilities of driving and prevent unnecessary interactions with the justice system.**

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6.   Young Ethnic Australians

In terms of envisioning 21st Century diversity, it is the young (aged younger than 26) that have the most at stake, and in many ways the most to invest. As such, ECCV has been actively canvassing the key concerns of ethnic youth, which include :

> ➤ negotiating a healthy cultural self-identity within a broader Australian context

> ➤ accessing community premises and facilities for group activities

> ➤ transitioning into, through, and out of education

> ➤ transitioning into and advancing in employment

> ➤ legal aid

> ➤ young carers

6.1   Negotiating a Healthy Cultural Self-identity

6.1.1   Of the eight Australian states and territories, Victoria has the third highest proportion of overseas-born young people. According to the 2006 Census data**,** 17% of Victorians aged 12 to 25 years are born overseas. Furthermore, a high 71% of young Victorians have a non-Australian ancestry and 30% are of mixed (two or more) ancestries. In short, ethnic youth (even if they don't identify themselves as such) represents a sizeable proportion of the Victorian community.

While ethnic youth are the first to recognise the commonality that exists amid the plurality of Victorian society, in 2010 they still reflect a considerable diversity in terms of their:

> ➤ personal interests and characteristics

> ➤ their ethnic and cultural backgrounds

> ➤ their past experiences in Australia (and prior to arrival if migrants)

> ➤ the characteristics of their local neighbourhoods and ethnic communities

As a result, many still report difficulties in finding a balance that satisfies their desire to fit in with a broader cultural context, communal as well as national, while maintaining an independent sense of self.

Public Awareness Campaign

6.1.2   With feelings of isolation a common symptom of ethnic youth struggling to establish their own identity, ECCV believes there could be individual and community benefits from a public campaign that reassures the public that such uncertainties about identity are common, perfectly normal and that support is available if necessary.

6.1.3   ECCV envisages the campaign to include a holistic understanding of :

> ➤ young people's ethnic identity formation within a range of settings

> ➤ the relationships between those settings

> ➤ the ways in which conditions in particular settings can counteract negative effects from other settings

> ➤ and the ways in which young people are both affected by and affect their environments.

Recommendation :

> ➤ **Development of a public campaign that reassures the public that such uncertainties about identity are common, perfectly normal and that support is available if necessary.**

6.2   Accessing Community Premises and Facilities for Group Activities

ECCV notes the importance of having recreational outlets available for ethnic youth so they can convene for arts, cultural, educational and leisure activities.

Community Centres

6.2.1   ECCV notes that community centres can be a vital focal point for :

> ➤ nurturing cultural exchanges among young ethnic Victorians

> ➤ cultivating cross-cultural interpersonal friendships and

> ➤ developing a sense of belonging to Australia.

6.2.2   However, numerous young members of new and emerging communities report frustration in accessing public spaces or youth centres where they can enrol in programs and activities for recreation and sport. While migrant resource centres (MRC) regularly offer programs that promote language, skill and leadership development workshops for youth, there are no council managed facilities available for hire to run these programs due to a surge in demand for venues by community groups.

Sporting Fields

6.2.3   Likewise, ECCV notes that sport is a particularly effective way to promote inclusion among newly-arrived Australians based on common interests and values shared by the diverse communities and the mainstream. Yet, access to outdoor spaces like sporting grounds is also proving difficult. While local councils are encouraging sporting clubs and teams to use outdoor spaces (e.g. parks) for free, however, due to legal and maintenance concerns, the group cannot use the same reserve on a regular weekly basis.

6.2.4   By actively keeping sport grounds available, these communities can retain their young members and continue to engage and encourage their participation in recreation thereby providing better outcomes, such as countering boredom which can lead to involvement with the juvenile justice system.

All Nations Cup

6.2.5   ECCV also notes the popularity of the All Nations Cup, a soccer competition previously sponsored by Football Federation Australia (FFA). Many called for a revival of a similar tournament which promoted communal participation by migrant and multicultural groups.

Recommendation :

➤ **A concerted effort by local councils, peak bodies and schools to ensure equal access to suitable venues for group activities to meet the needs and expectations of our youth.**

➤ **Consideration be given to reviving a tournament similar to the former All Nations Cup which promoted communal participation by migrant and multicultural groups.**

6.3   Transitioning Into, Through, and Out of education

6.3.1   Many young Victorians from migrants and multicultural backgrounds are uncertain about their future and how best to achieve their goals in their new circumstances. Newly-arrived migrants and refugees in particular tend to face added difficulties when navigating the passage into, through and out of the education system due to :

> ➤ a disrupted education pre-arrival

> ➤ a higher priority placed on joining the workforce or obtaining a traineeship by family

> ➤ insufficient facilities and service infrastructure in the youth's areas of residence

> ➤ high transport costs and limited public transport services in outer metropolitan and regional areas

> ➤ gaps when transitioning between the different systems (school/tertiary and education/work)

6.3.2   To address these issues, ECCV suggests :

> ➤ greater recognition of learning challenges within standard educational programs and encouragement of more flexible learning pathways

> ➤ concessional public transport pricing to refugee and humanitarian students and job seekers for at least two years of settlement

> ➤ provision of assistance with the transition process and added resources for those whose needs do not exactly fit established funding and support criteria

> ➤ advance youth counselling about available career options and potential outcomes.

6.3.3   ECCV believes that innovative strategies are required that allow flexibility in terms of youth involvement in education and have space to make mistakes and try again.

Recommendation :

➤ **Educational institutions show a longer term view of youth career options.**

➤ **The development of Innovative strategies to recognise learning challenges within standard educational programs and encourage flexible learning pathways.**

➤ **The allocation of resources to youth whose needs do not exactly fit established funding and support criteria.**

6.4   Transitioning Into and Advancing in Employment

6.4.1   ECCV notes that numerous barriers affect youth from accessing the job market, including :

➤ lack of training and / or work experience,

➤ financial insecurity and

➤ erosion of self-confidence.

6.4.2   Moreover, the most vulnerable continue to come from lower socio-economic status backgrounds and live in regional and remote areas.

6.4.3   ECCV calls for stronger connections between educational institutions, ethnic communities and the business sector to highlight opportunities such as volunteering and work-based experiences and expand the range of available job choices beyond those currently presented at the employment pathway program.

Recommendation :

➤ **Development of better connections between educational institutions, ethnic communities and the business sector regarding opportunities for youth such as volunteering and work-based experiences.**

6.5 Legal aid

6.5.1 ECCV notes that offending behaviour is not just a legal problem that requires a legal response but is a wider communal problem with socio-economic issues and effects. Moreover, a strategy to divert young offenders from entering the juvenile justice system is highly dependent on the family. For some minority youth, however, the quality of the family environment can be an additional stressor during the turbulent adolescent period due to :

> ➤ parental settlement difficulties

> ➤ differences in cultural values and expectations

> ➤ changes in family roles.

6.5.2 ECCV calls for an integrated service system comprising governmental departments (human services and justice) and the community sector to :

> ➤ assist family units to better support their young (in the absence of family members, community-based agencies can play an important role)

> ➤ assist youth to adopt a law abiding lifestyle and participate positively in civil society

> ➤ identify and nurture young natural leaders within communities (that have a high profile of CALD youth under supervision) to act as role models.

6.5.3 While it is important to develop partnerships between the justice system and community-based organisations, many of these organisations face challenges relating to limited resources. More funding is required for the community sector and for youth workers who are the most skilled practitioners trained to respond to young people's complex behaviours and needs.

6.5.4 ECCV also supports flexibility in the requirements that qualify youths who can be legally represented and highlights the need to address issues associated with accessing legal aid.

Recommendation :

➤ **Development of an integrated service system comprising governmental departments (human services and justice) and the community sector to assist family units to better support their young.**

➤ **Greater funding for the community sector and youth workers to assist in their rehabilitation of young offenders.**

➤ **Flexibility in the criteria which determine the eligibility and access of young offenders to legal representation and legal aid.**

6.6   Young Carers

6.6.1   The challenges of an ageing population and low fertility rates are increasing the number of youth who help care in families where an elder has a health condition, a disability or a mental illness. Yet there is limited awareness in ethnic communities of the impact of caring for and relating to ageing family members who were often born overseas and may speak a difficult language to the young carer.

6.6.2   ECCV notes that caring responsibilities are not only stressful at times but quite exhausting for young people as many have to balance their worries, caring tasks, school workload, employment, and friends and family relationships.

6.6.3   Recognising that many ethnic youth require support and assistance, ECCV calls for greater awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by the young ethnic carers and an improvement to the services and programs available that support them.

Recommendation :

➤ **Increased awareness of information services offered to CALD youth and the challenges faced by the young carers, available services and support programs.**

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7.   Ageing Ethnic Australians

2010 promises to be a landmark year in terms of our ageing population because it signals the first wave of Australia's baby boomers – those born from 1946 – to reach pension eligibility.

According to official projections, up to 107,000 baby boomer women are estimated to turn 64 (the female pension age), while 100,000 baby boomer men will reach the male pension age of 65 in 2011. Victorian and Australian government demographic reports on CALD seniors indicate that by 2011 as many as 40 per cent of Victorians over 65 will be from a CALD background. In some of Melbourne's local government areas (LGAs) that figure is currently well over 50 per cent. In the Australian population one in every five people over 80 will be from a CALD background by 2011 and that figure will increase to one in every four by 2025.

There are a number of implications arising from this demographic groundshift, many of which have particular relevance to Victorians from migrant and multicultural backgrounds. Particular issues requiring attention include :

➤ Partnering of specialised ethnic aged care services in Active Service Model

➤ The destigmatisation of mental health

➤ Social support and culturally responsive aged care services for CALD seniors

➤ Heat wave preparedness

7.1   Specialised Ethnic Aged Care Services

7.1.1   ECCV supports the move towards the Home and Aged Community Care (HACC) Active Service Model (ASM) that encourages independent living for older persons and increased collaboration between aged care and health providers.

7.1.2   ECCV also proposes that ethnic, multicultural and community service providers be further supported as a "specialised culturally competent service" that provides a range of services including:

➤ bilingual, bicultural brokerage to generic aged care providers

➤ cultural competency briefings and policy development support

➤ languages services advice

➤ mentoring for new and emerging communities and "hard to reach" ethnic groups.

Recommendation :

➤ **Increased awareness of the need for culturally responsive ASM provision by mainstream health and aged care service providers, in particular HACC providers and local councils, through the specialised expertise of ethnic and multicultural organisations.**

➤ **Strengthening of partnerships between ethnic and multicultural community-based organisations and allied health and aged care providers.**

7.2 Mental Health Destigmatisation

7.2.1 ECCV notes that CALD seniors are a specific diversity group that experiences higher rates of depression than the average population. As such, ECCV has identified mental health as a priority issue for 2010 with a particular focus on community education to demystify mental health issues in ethnic communities.

Recommendation :

➤ **Development of culturally responsive mental health initiatives that focus on the destigmatisation, promotion and awareness, prevention and early intervention for CALD seniors.**

7.3 Social Support and Culturally Responsive Aged Care Services

7.3.1 ECCV notes that many CALD seniors over 65 years of age:

- ➤ lack a clear understanding of their rights

- ➤ are socially isolated

- ➤ have insufficient knowledge about health and aged care services resulting in uninformed decisions about quality lifestyle and decreased wellbeing

- ➤ experience higher than average advanced dementia and do not seek assistance until a crisis occurs and high care institutionalised services are required.

7.3.2 Furthermore, ECCV research emphasises that CALD older people:

- ➤ prefer to live at home longer than the average population

- ➤ express a preference for ethno-specific services in particular Social Support Programs that require additional transport support for increased access

- ➤ depend on support from "ethnic family carers" identified in a government inquiry into carers, as a hidden group that lacks adequate support systems.

- ➤ find limited English language proficiency acts as a barrier to effective access to aged care services.

7.3.3 ECCV believes that CALD seniors benefit from current government initiatives such as Social Support Programs. Other worthwhile initiatives include :

- ➤ the Supported Access Pilot Program (SAPP) that assists CALD seniors in navigating and gaining access to the aged care system

- ➤ the Community Partners Program (CPP)

- ➤ the Partners In Culturally Appropriate Care (PICAC) programs, and

- ➤ Primary Care Partnerships (PCP).

7.3.4   Unfortunately, current demand for culturally responsive aged services exceeds supply and many PCP networks often bypass ethnic agency networks. ECCV believes that each of these initiatives is an ideal platform for aged care promotion and can be creatively modified and targeted at specific diverse groups in partnership with ethnic and multicultural providers.

7.3.5   Community feedback indicates that Victoria's ageing population would benefit from the expansion of the SAPP for CALD seniors, not just to high density CALD areas but also to the small / medium communities and low density ethnic regions in metropolitan and rural areas where CALD communities have lower access to general services.

Recommendation :

➤ **Consideration be given to additional Social Support Programs such as resources for transport access for CALD seniors and ethnic family carers in small / medium, new and emerging communities in metropolitan, regional, and rural areas.**

➤ **Expansion of SAPP for CALD seniors to both high density ethnic regions and small / medium ethnic communities in metropolitan areas.**

➤ **Provision of appropriate information and community education campaigns within a culturally responsive framework to CALD seniors, aged care and health providers on :**

  – **elder's rights**

  – **dementia management**

  – **palliative care; and**

  – **advance care planning.**

➤ **Availability of free interpreter services for CALD seniors to access health and aged care services and up-to-date information to improve the decision making ability of CALD seniors.**

7.4   Heat Wave Preparedness

7.4.1   ECCV notes that the impact of climate change is particularly pronounced on the elderly and calls for more affordable housing with appropriate energy-efficient cooling systems.

Recommendation :

➤ **Consideration be given to improved access to affordable building modification, maintenance and repair of energy-efficient cooling systems for pensioners.**

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