



ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria

ECCV submission on Older People's Action Plan to the Commissioner for Senior Victorians October 2013

About 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.

Workforce Participation

ECCV believes it is vital to ensure access of older people from a non-English speaking background in participating in the workforce. As more ethnic baby boomers are retiring and with the growing trend of people living healthier and longer, there is a need to provide opportunities for older people from non-English speaking backgrounds to retrain and re-enter the workforce.

Older people from a non-English speaking background could be trained in certificate courses in aged care, as carers and in dementia support as they have the cultural and linguistic knowledge required to work with culturally diverse clients. This also applies to new and emerging ageing communities which lack culturally specific workers.

Some people from non-English speaking background lack the confidence to retrain. Effective pathways are from ESL classes in ethnic and multicultural organisations to certificate courses targeted specifically at older people from culturally diverse backgrounds, followed by job placement support.

Recommendation 1

That the Victorian Government provides incentives for the recruitment, training and job placement support to ethnic and multicultural organisations.

Technology and mature age learning

ECCV community consultations indicate that seniors from a non-English speaking background are less internet savvy than English speakers. In order to improve access by seniors from a non-English speaking background to the internet it is vital that training opportunities are provided for seniors from a non-English speaking background.

Taking part in life-long learning is becoming an important aspect of positive ageing. Many people came to Australia as refugees and displaced persons and have limited English and literacy levels. Learning about the Internet, Skype, You Tube and multilingual online podcasts provides them with access to lifelong learning in alternative formats and preferred languages as well as access to consumer driven e-Health programs.

Recommendation 2

That the Victorian Government encourages Internet kiosks and Internet training targeted at older people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Three things that would make a difference to seniors from a non-English speaking background**Governance Support for ethnic seniors clubs**

Ethnic and multicultural seniors clubs play a vital role in multicultural communities as they are a place for socialising, communicating in one's first language, and receiving information on health and wellbeing related issues.

Several ethnic and multicultural seniors clubs are experiencing difficulties with succession planning due to lack of information about how to deal with increased club regulation, financial and legal compliance, and complex insurance regulation. As a result some have been forced to close down in the last few years. Difficulties in governance and compliance affects more established ethnic communities and members from new and emerging communities.

Victoria has an extensive network of ethnic and multicultural community welfare agencies. They include ethno-specific organisation, multicultural centres, and migrant resource centres. More resourcing and coordination of ethnic and multicultural seniors club is required that focuses on leadership planning assistance, financial and legal compliance, and succession planning assistance for younger retirees.

Simple step-by-step guides need to be provided in plain English and multilingual formats for people from a non-English speaking background for example on how to be a member of a committee, about incorporation rules and grant submission writing.

Recommendation 3

That the Victorian Government provides governance training and support to Victoria's seniors clubs through existing ethnic and multicultural networks.

Support for Planned Activity Groups and Friendly Visiting Programs

ECCV Community consultations show that social isolation is a common issue among seniors from a non-English speaking background. Ethno-specific and multicultural Planned Activity Groups (PAGs) and the Friendly Visiting Programs provide vital same language social support for seniors from a non-English speaking background. They are easily customised, along the lines of HACC person-centred care, to suit people's cultural preferences.

Ethno-specific PAGs provide frail, older people from non-English speaking backgrounds with:

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

As the HACC program is transitioning towards Commonwealth management, it is vital that PAGs and Friendly Visiting Programs will have continued support after July 2015.

Recommendation 4

That the Victorian Government ensures continued support of ethno-specific and multicultural Planned Activity Groups and Friendly Visiting Programs.

Include new and emerging communities in Older People's Action Plan

Populations from new and emerging communities are increasingly moving into older age groups. These communities will increasingly need access to aged care services. It is vital that these communities are included in the Department of Health's/ MACSV's Planning Process to meet the needs of a wide range of multicultural communities.

Recommendation 5

That the Victorian Government includes new and emerging communities in the Older People's Action Plan to meet the needs of a wide range of communities.