

ECCV Submission
to the Parliament of Australia's
Senate Community Affairs References Committee's Inquiry
into the
processes undertaken by the Department of Social Services in
allocating funding through the grants round in the latter half of 2014
February 2015
Melbourne

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee's Inquiry into the allocation of grant funding in the latter half of 2014. ECCV is the voice of multicultural Victoria as its peak advocacy body, and has a membership of over 220 ethnic and multicultural community organisations. This submission is based on consultation with the ECCV's Aged Care Policy Sub-Committee, which includes representatives from ethno-specific and multicultural aged care service providers and other key stakeholder groups.

Key message

ECCV advocates that the competitive funding structure underpinning the Aged Care Service Improvement and Healthy Ageing Grants (ACSIHAG), administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS), manifests inequities and contradictions. Ethno-specific and multicultural aged care service providers (multicultural SPs) are providing cultural expertise and support to generic aged care service providers against which they are now forced to compete for funding, and this provision of support and expertise is not acknowledged within the current competitive funding structure. Further, in a competitive tendering context, smaller multicultural SPs lack the capacity to compete for funds on an equal footing with larger generic SPs. ECCV stresses that this further disadvantages older consumers from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds, who require culturally responsive services to remain living independently at home and a genuine choice of ethno-specific and multicultural services.

ECCV believes that these inequities and contradictions in the competitive tendering process directly contradict the Government's overarching philosophical framework of consumer direction in aged care and have the potential to establish unfair competition practices. Furthermore, these inequities and contradictions undermine collaboration between the multicultural and generic sectors.



The Voice of Multicultural Victoria

ECCV's concerns must be understood within the broader context of uncertainty surrounding the anticipated open tendering processes and possible loss of funding for Victoria's unique multicultural services under the transition of the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program to the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP).

Human rights

ECCV highlights that equitable access to culturally and linguistically appropriate aged care and culturally appropriate aged care related information is a basic human right. Almost a third of Victorians aged 65 and over are migrants from Non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds and they deserve the right to age well.

The National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

Recommendation 1

That the Commonwealth Government include the needs of older people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds in the development of national ageing and aged care policies and programs on an ongoing basis.

The Australian Government's *National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Backgrounds* stresses that the needs of older people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds must be included in the development of Australian Government ageing and aged care policies and programs on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, the strategy highlights the need to foster partnerships between government, aged care providers, and ethno specific and multicultural organisations to build the capacity of people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds to access all services across the aged care continuum.

Maintaining inter-sectorial collaboration and fair/transparent competition practices

Recommendation 2

That multicultural SPs are financially compensated for the specialist knowledge and services that they provide to generic SPs through the use of brokerage funding models.

Recommendation 3

That the Commonwealth Government promote, facilitate, and support partnerships within the multicultural aged care sector to ensure the long-term sustainability of its smaller and diverse SPs and increase their capacity to provide diversity of choice for consumers from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds.

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ECCV recognises that Victoria’s multicultural SPs play a vital role in providing culturally appropriate aged care services. They also advise and support generic aged care agencies in this area. ECCV notes that generic aged care SPs have increasingly turned to multicultural SPs for advice on how to deliver culturally appropriate care. Both the published and unpublished literature indicates that the future of community aged care service delivery for people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds lies in the coexistence of generic and multicultural services working together and in partnership (ECCV *Building New Bridges* 26). This supports the need to promote effective and collaborative partnerships between generic and multicultural SPs, where the latter are financially compensated for their specialist knowledge and services, as well as the need to increase the capacity of multicultural organisations directly.

Smaller multicultural SPs lack the capacity to compete for funds on an equal footing with the larger generic SPs that they are also subsidising with unremunerated cultural expertise and support. ECCV maintains that these inequities and contradictions in the competitive tendering processes have the potential to establish unfair competition practices and undermine collaboration between the multicultural and generic sectors. In their response to Key Directions for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme, the Victorian Department of Health (now the Department of Health and Human Services) has also noted that competitive tendering processes in aged care run the risk of undermining collaboration and good will within the sector while also disadvantaging smaller agencies, such as ethno-specific and multicultural agencies (16).

ACSIHAG funding

Recommendation 4

That the Commonwealth community services tendering processes account for the importance of smaller multicultural SPs to the long-term sustainability, effectiveness, and consumer responsiveness of the aged care sector.

Recommendation 5

That the Commonwealth Government provide sectoral support and capacity building opportunities for smaller multicultural SPs to allow them to compete for ACSIHAG funding on an equal footing with larger SPs.

Recommendation 6

That DSS provide adequate and timely information and about changes to community service tendering processes and provide practical and transparent feedback to unsuccessful applicants.



The Voice of Multicultural Victoria

ACSIHAG funding is intended to “support people from diverse backgrounds with diverse aged care needs”. However, ECCV’s community consultations indicate that multicultural SPs were widely unsuccessful in their ACSIHAG applications in the latter half of 2014, and early anecdotal evidence suggests that the systemic shift to a competitive funding model runs the risk of forcing many of the smaller providers to close. ECCV stresses that this would result in a loss of expertise, resources and networks that would directly impact upon the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the aged care sector, placing unnecessary strain on the health system.

Further, ECCV believes that such a scenario would be in direct conflict with the Government’s overarching philosophical framework of consumer direction in the aged care market, as it would lead to a more generic market that is incapable of responding to diverse consumer needs. ECCV also brings to the inquiry’s attention concerns raised by multicultural SPs about: the limited information provided about the new tendering processes; the restricted time-frame given in which to apply for the grants; the evidence base used to determine grant allocations; the transparency of the tendering processes.

The Community Partners Program

Recommendation 7

That DSS guarantee ongoing funding for the Community Partners Program (CPP).

Recommendation 8

That the Commonwealth Government conduct an evaluation project to investigate the outcomes achieved and the knowledge gathered by the CPP, and use this to inform evidence based practice and continuous service improvement.

Under the DSS’s competitive tendering processes, recurrent funding for projects specifically targeted at people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds and the Community Partners Program (CPP) have been streamlined into the ACSIHAG funding round. The CPP is a highly successful infrastructure which has enhanced access and equity to aged care related information and services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities since 2005. Numerous multicultural SPs were abruptly informed in late-December 2014 that their funding for the CPP would not be renewed when the three year agreement ends in June 2015. ECCV’s community consultations have revealed that there was: a lack of prior consultation from DSS about this discontinuation of funding; a lack of transparency in new funding patterns, which appear to have given preference to larger, generic organisations that may not have relevant expertise and capabilities in providing culturally responsive care and engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse members of the community; and a lack of succession planning for this longstanding program.

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http://www.eccv.org.au/library/ECCV_Discussion_Paper_-_Healthy_Ageing_in_NEC.pdf

ECCV and Monash University, *Mainstream Versus Ethno-Specific Services it's not an 'Either/Or'*. 2008.

Victorian Department of Health, *Key directions for the Commonwealth Home support Programme-DH response*. July 2014.

<http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Key-directions-for-the-Commonwealth-Home-support-Programme-DH-response-July-2014>

Appendix

Department of Health and Ageing's 2007 budget statement outlining The CPP:

[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/budget/publishing.nsf/Content/48B561410336D30ACA257CA0003FF3FC/\\$File/afact17.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/budget/publishing.nsf/Content/48B561410336D30ACA257CA0003FF3FC/$File/afact17.pdf)