



## Taking a step: The multilingual potential of Australia's people



Photo: Intercultural Storytelling Circle, My Journey - My Lucky Country, Darebin City Council

### About ECCV

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Inc. (ECCV) is the Voice of Multicultural Victoria. As the peak policy advocacy body for ethnic and multicultural organisations in Victoria, we are proud to have been the key advocate for culturally diverse communities in Victoria since 1974. For over 40 years we have been the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community. ECCV has a membership of 220 organisations, individuals and eight Ethnic Communities' Councils (ECCs) in regional Victoria.

### Portfolio

This collection of portfolio papers addresses issues around emerging ageing trends in multicultural Victoria. ECCV notes that the term of 'ethnic' is still used by seniors from multicultural backgrounds.



### **Multilingual potential of Australia's people**

ECCV contests that the bilingual and bicultural skills that many Australians have is not utilised at full potential, particularly in markets such as aged care with its steadily increasing demand for personalised services and interactions.

Australia is a multicultural, multi-faith and multilingual nation. Statistical data shows that Victorians come from more than 200 countries, speak 260 languages and dialects and follow 135 religious faiths. Approximately 30 percent of Victorian seniors are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and they may revert to their mother tongue as they age and often do not speak English well.

Many ethno-specific, multicultural and culturally inclusive organisations employ bilingual workers to enable and facilitate communication with clients and leverage on people's cultural and linguistic expertise. However, the ability to speak a language other than English and cultural expertise is not widely recognised to be a professional skill. ECCV contests that this linked to the lack of accreditation practices of language skills in an aged care context and limited employer recognition of bilingual expertise.

Culturally inclusive care practices are an important pillar of Australia's world class aged care system. The effective delivery of culturally inclusive care requires bilingual and bi-cultural skills and sensitivity towards religious and spiritual traditions and customs. Considering the increase in clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as well as the current undersupply of a culturally responsive trained aged care workforce, ECCV believes that it is timely to consider strengthening Victoria's multilingual and culturally inclusive workforce.

Initial discussion to invest in the training of a multilingual aged care workforce could include:

- Accreditation of bilingual and bi-cultural skills;
- Language teaching on aged care specific terminology used in languages other than English;
- Training to effectively interact with a culturally, linguistically, and spiritually diverse clientele.



Photo: ECCV Launch of Macedonian community 'respect and dignity in ageing' education



# ECCV Ageing Portfolio 2016, sheet 4: Aged care workforce



## Further reading

- Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing, 2011, *Working with Bilingual Staff in Aged Care - Practice Guide*, available at: <http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/dmdocuments/Bilingual%20Workers%20Practice%20Guide.pdf>.
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, 2011, *ECCV Submission for the Inquiry into Opportunities for Participation of Victorian Seniors to the Family and Community Development Committee*, available at: [http://www.eccv.org.au/library/file/policy/ECCV\\_submission\\_to\\_Inquiry\\_into\\_Opps\\_for\\_Partn\\_of\\_Vic\\_Seniors\\_2011.pdf](http://www.eccv.org.au/library/file/policy/ECCV_submission_to_Inquiry_into_Opps_for_Partn_of_Vic_Seniors_2011.pdf).
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, 2014, *Multicultural Aged Care Strategy*, available at: [http://www.eccv.org.au/library/ECCV's\\_Multicultural\\_Aged\\_Care\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.eccv.org.au/library/ECCV's_Multicultural_Aged_Care_Strategy.pdf).
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, 2016, *Submission to Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry on Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce*, available on: [http://www.eccv.org.au/library/ECCV\\_collaborative\\_submission\\_on\\_aged\\_care\\_workforce.pdf](http://www.eccv.org.au/library/ECCV_collaborative_submission_on_aged_care_workforce.pdf).
- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), 2013, *Harmony in the workplace*, available at: [http://www.fecca.org.au/images/Documents/Harmony/full\\_harmony%20in%20the%20workplace\\_delivering%20the%20diversity%20dividend.pdf](http://www.fecca.org.au/images/Documents/Harmony/full_harmony%20in%20the%20workplace_delivering%20the%20diversity%20dividend.pdf).
- Leading Age Services Australia (LASA) Victoria, 2014, *CALD Employee Engagement & Cross Cultural Resources List - October 2014*, available at: [http://www.lasavictoria.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/CALD-Employee-Engagement\\_Cross-Cultural-Resources-List\\_October-2014.pdf](http://www.lasavictoria.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/CALD-Employee-Engagement_Cross-Cultural-Resources-List_October-2014.pdf).
- Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, 2016, *Diversity planning and practice*, available at <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/>.
- Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2016, *Population and Migration*, available at: <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/population-and-migration>.

