



# **ECCV Submission**

## **On the**

### **HACC Transition in Victoria**

## **To the**

### **Australian Department of Social Services**

#### **How can the Commonwealth ensure access of seniors from a non-English speaking background to HACC services in Victoria?**

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) highlights that 31% of Victorians aged 65 and over are from a non-English speaking background and therefore HACC services need to be culturally responsive. ECCV represents the voice of multicultural communities in Victoria. As a peak body we have advocated for seniors from a non-English speaking background since 1974. ECCV has consulted on the HACC transition through its multicultural Access and Support network and its Aged Care Policy Sub-Committee that consists of ethno-specific and multicultural aged care service providers, stakeholders, and community members.

#### **Language Services**

The *HACC Language Services Credit Line* is vital to facilitate access of seniors from a non-English speaking background to aged care services. Members of the ethnic and multicultural community aged care sector in Victoria have expressed concerns that agencies that work with clients from a non-English speaking background will not be able to access the HACC Language Services Credit Line after July 2015. Multicultural aged care agencies are concerned that a lack of targeted HACC funding for interpreting and translating services will place seniors from a non-English speaking background at a serious disadvantage and lessen their opportunities to maintain their independence and links to the community.

**Recommendation 1**

That the Commonwealth Government introduces a subsidy in Home and Community Care for interpreting and translating services in Victoria.

**Access and Support**

ECCV community consultations have shown that seniors from a non-English speaking background encounter social isolation and have varying levels of English. Bilingual and bicultural *Access and Support* workers assist seniors from a non-English speaking background to navigate the HACC system and link them to HACC services. Members of the ethnic and multicultural community aged care sector have emphasised how vital the face to face element of the Access and Support roles are; as relevant details of clients from a non-English speaking background are missed over the phone. Also seniors from a non-English speaking background find it difficult to stay on the phone for extended periods especially as they need an interpreter for the phone assessment.

**Recommendation 2**

That the Commonwealth Government ensures the continuation and strengthening of the Access and Support program for clients from a non-English speaking background.

**PAG and Friendly Visiting Program**

ECCV Community consultations have shown seniors from a non-English speaking background encounter social isolation due to language and cultural barriers. Currently the HACC program funds about 55 ethno-specific Planned Activity Groups (PAGs) and same-language Friendly Visiting Programs in Victoria. These are easily customised, along the lines of HACC person-centred care, to suit people's cultural preferences. It is important to recognise the vital role of ethno-specific PAGs that extend beyond the usual social contact of such programs. 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.

ECCV feedback indicates that the community demand for ethno-specific PAGs is far greater than funding allocations. Increasingly members from new and emerging communities will also need access to PAGs and Friendly Visiting Programs in order to stay living at home longer.

**Recommendation 3**

That the Commonwealth Government continues to support the ethno-specific and multicultural PAGs and Friendly Visiting Programs for culturally diverse seniors in Victoria.

**Recommendation 4:**

That the Commonwealth Government allocates additional resources for ethno-specific and multicultural PAGs and Friendly Visiting Programs targeted at older people from new and emerging communities.

**New and emerging communities and smaller ethnic communities**

Populations from new and emerging communities are increasingly moving into older age groups. These communities are new in the sense that they have mostly settled in Australia comparatively recently. They are emerging in that they are yet to experience the peak in their aged populations and increasingly will need access to aged care services.

Further, smaller ethnic communities have the right to express and preserve their cultural identity. It is vital that new and emerging communities and smaller ethnic communities are included in the Department of Social Services' planning process to meet the needs of a wide range of communities.

**Recommendation 5:**

That the Commonwealth Government includes a wide range of multicultural communities in the HACC planning process, including those from new and emerging and smaller ethnic communities.

**Recommendation 6:**

That the Commonwealth Government facilitates partnerships between new and emerging communities, smaller ethnic communities and more established multicultural communities.

**Technology**

Seniors from a non-English speaking background tend to feel less comfortable to access aged care services online or via the phone. The current aged care system is geared towards those who are familiar with technology and able to navigate the complex aged care system. In order to enhance the utilisation of online aged care services it is vital that the linguistic responsiveness of information on aged care access is significantly enhanced.

**Recommendation 7:**

That the Commonwealth Government improves linguistic responsiveness of information relating to aged care access.

**Ongoing consultations**

It is vital that the Victorian community aged care sector is consulted on a regular basis to ensure ongoing, formalised discussions surrounding the HACC transition. ECCV and multicultural aged care service providers would like to create and strengthen relationships with the Department of Social Services. ECCV suggests the establishment of a state-based

Victorian Home and Community Care Advisory Committee that brings together aged care peak bodies and stakeholders. Such a Committee will be vital for the Victorian aged care sector in getting updated on and adapting to the transition. This will ensure a collaborative approach between the Victorian aged care sector and the Department.

**Recommendation 8:**

That the Commonwealth Government establishes an Advisory Committee on the HACC transition for Victoria.

**Regional and rural Victoria**

Increasingly numbers of seniors from a non-English speaking background in regional and rural Victoria lack access to culturally appropriate services in regional and rural Victoria due to geographic spread.

**Recommendation 9:**

That the Commonwealth Government supports access of culturally diverse seniors to aged care services in regional and rural Victoria.

**Workforce**

In order to support culturally diverse clients, the HACC program should enhance workforce development that is tailored to the needs of culturally diverse seniors.

**Recommendation 10**

That the Commonwealth Government tailors workforce development programs to the needs of culturally diverse clients.

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