



**ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria**

Patron

The Right Hon Malcolm Fraser AC, CH,
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**ECCV Submission to
VCOSS
on the
Community Sector Reform Consultation:
Towards a more effective and sustainable community
services system
March 2013**

1. The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the statewide peak advocacy body representing ethno-specific agencies and multicultural organisations. For more than 35 years ECCV has remained the principal liaison point between culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, government and the wider community in Victoria. ECCV advocates and lobbies all levels of government in areas such as human rights, access and equity, racism, discrimination, employment, education, health and justice. ECCV has been a key player in building Victoria as a successful, harmonious and multicultural society.
2. ECCV welcomes the Service Sector Reform project undertaken by the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS). ECCV appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to improve how government and the ethnic and multicultural community service sector work together.
3. This submission addresses key issues presented in the discussion paper *Towards a More Effective and Sustainable Community Services System* with a particular focus on enhancing the lives of Victorians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by improving access to community service organisations (CSO).

A snapshot of Victorian's culturally diverse service users

4. ECCV recognises that the community services sector is constantly challenged by Victoria's growing multicultural population. Today and in the future, the Victorian community services sector could expect every second or third person that uses such services to be from a culturally diverse and non-English speaking background.
5. About 45 per cent of the Victorian population were born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas originating from more than 230 countries, representing 120 religions and speaking as many as 200 languages other than English (VMC, 2011 Census).

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6. Victoria's population of older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is growing faster than for other older Australians. About 30 per cent of people over 65 are from a culturally diverse background.
7. ECCV and Monash University studies (Radermacher 2010) show that older people from a culturally diverse background tend to access services when they reach a crisis. ECCV feedback shows that they lack trust in generic services and receive inadequate information in languages other than English.
8. Victoria is both enriched and challenged by the arrival of new groups of migrants and refugees. ECCV consultations show that people from new and emerging communities tend not to understand government services available to them. They often rely on family and friends for support which is neither sustainable nor adequate for complex needs.
9. Embracing many generations under one roof is not uncommon in many ethnic groups. In many cultures decision-making takes place in the context of a family dependency worldview. Decisions about accessing services are made jointly by elderly parents, their adult children and other family members.

A snapshot Victoria's ethnic and multicultural community service sector

10. The ethnic and multicultural community service sector provides important culture specific services to people from non-English speaking backgrounds. There are over 200 ethnic and multicultural community service organisations in Victoria that make up the membership base of ECCV. They consist of several Migrant Resource Centres as well as large and smaller ethno-specific welfare agencies.
11. ECCV points out that Victoria's extensive ethnic and multicultural community service organisations are vital to the design of a strong, sustainable community service system. They provide vital services that complement rather than duplicate government services and are good examples of successful culturally responsiveness.
12. Sometimes the important work of ethnic and multicultural agencies is not well understood by generic community service organisations. ECCV is aware of and concerned by such misconceptions. There is a myth, for example that ethnic services are fragmented, and however, the fact is they are more likely these days to work in close collaboration across the multicultural sector. Their existing strengths and capabilities are impressive especially as successful models of cultural responsiveness, which include:

- Recruiting bilingual staff

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- Being well-networked with other ethno-specific organisations via committees and cultural diversity network meetings
- Providing a wide range of culturally responsive social support and welfare services across different geographic areas
- Generating high levels of trust amongst people from culturally diverse backgrounds who use the services
- Conducting about 50 ethno-specific, same-language social support programs via the Victorian HACC (Home and Community Care) Program
- Coordinating volunteer programs that draw on people from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Promoting programs via the ethnic media
- Providing cultural awareness training for other groups

The following section contains recommendations that improve the effectiveness of CSO services to CALD users and provides a more sustainable, culturally responsive community service system.

Solutions regarding reform pathways, models of partnership and coordination to create a more culturally responsive people-centred system

Early intervention

13. ECCV agrees with VCOSS that early intervention is important to improve people's wellbeing. ECCV believes that community education for people from CALD backgrounds is therefore a good way to focus on prevention.
14. ECCV feedback indicates that whenever ethnic and multicultural organisations deal with crisis support for people from culturally diverse backgrounds they follow-up by developing appropriate education programs in areas such as aged care, dementia, elder abuse, domestic violence, mental health and health care support. These are subsequently well attended by non-English speaking people with the outcome of avoiding crisis situations and improving people's wellbeing.

Recommendation 1

That adequate resources continue to be invested in the referral, community education and prevention programs in the ethnic and multicultural sector.

Strengthening cultural competence

15. ECCV is aware that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds that use services often have varied and complex needs. Ethno-specific service organisations that are clearly perceived as

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culturally responsive provide easy and timely access for people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

16. ECCV points out that many ethno-specific community organisations provide cultural competency training for aged care providers and other organisations. ECCV believes that the cultural competency expertise of ethno-specific agencies and multicultural migrant resource centres benefits the community services sector in general.

Recommendation 2

That the role of ethno-specific and multicultural organisations in providing culturally responsive training to the community service sector be recognised.

People-centred/outcomes focussed

17. Research conducted by ECCV via Monash University (2008 and 2010) showed that people from non-English speaking backgrounds have a preference for services provided by ethno-specific agencies, as they take time to help them understand appropriate pathways of support.
18. ECCV notes that many people from refugee and emerging community backgrounds have multiple complex needs that require a combination of healthcare, mental healthcare, housing, employment and interpreter support. The ethnic sector has developed considerable expertise in providing culturally appropriate support and referrals.
19. For people from diverse backgrounds a person-centred service means a culturally responsive service. ECCV advocates for greater collaboration between ethno-specific agencies and other community service organisations to maximise the use of their cultural expertise to better meet the needs of people from culturally diverse backgrounds. ECCV believes that case stories of how the ethnic sector operates and deals with culturally diverse users would benefit the community sector in general.

Recommendation 3

That reporting opportunities be provided for ethnic and multicultural organisations to include narrative reports and best practice cases stories of successful cultural competency.

Recommendation 4

That the various cases of ethno-specific and multicultural organisations be documented and reported across the CSO as best practice models of culturally responsive community service delivery.

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Partnerships Model

20. ECCV acknowledges that partnerships and collaboration between ethno-specific organisations and other community sector organisations would significantly improve the effectiveness of service delivery to people from non-English speaking backgrounds and streamline referral pathways.
21. ECCV evidence-based partnership research conducted by Monash University (2010) highlighted the benefits and challenges of forming partnerships between ethno-specific and multicultural service organisations with local government and other community organisations, particularly in areas such as aged care, allied health and mental health. Ethno-specific organisations are of varying size and some are smaller than potential partnership organisations. Findings of that study highlighted key considerations for the future that would ensure effective partnerships.
22. Ethno-specific and generic providers would benefit from increased awareness of the value, nature and need for partnerships with the ethnic sector. The Practising Positive Partnership Model (see diagram 1) generated by the joint ECCV and Monash University research (2010) provides effective strategies for improved collaboration. These include:
 - Addressing power inequalities between prospective partners that are of varying size and building the capacity of small ethno-specific organisations when partnering with local government
 - Building relationships of trust across culturally diverse organisations and local government to minimise token representation
 - Recognising the professional capacity of different community organisations and providing appropriate resources such as enabling representatives from smaller ethno-specific agencies to attend network meeting at larger providers.
 - Acknowledging that external influences can limit the effectiveness of partnerships across the community services sector for example top-down government restrictions that restrict geographic catchment areas.

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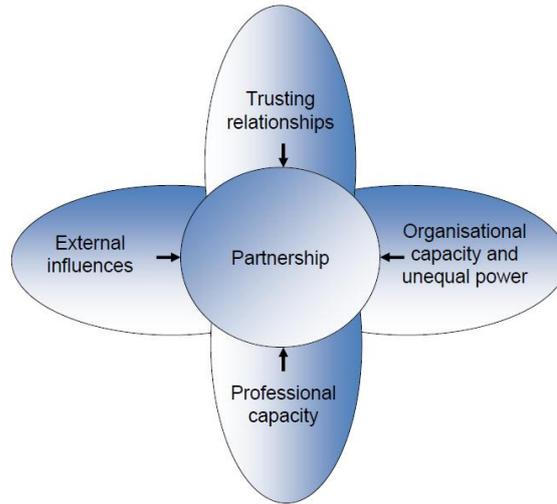


Diagram 1: Practising Positive Partnerships Model
(Page 8 ECCV/Monash University research report *Practising Positive Partnerships in the Ethnic and Multicultural Community 2010* by Y. Karunarathna, H. Radermacher, S. Feldman)

23. ECCV believes that more balanced partnerships between the ethnic and multicultural sector on the one hand and government and other community agencies would improve service delivery and referral processes for service users from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Recommendation 5

That local government and larger community service organisations provide the time and resources to create effective partnerships with smaller ethno-specific and multicultural organisations.

Funding models

24. ECCV recognises that the ethnic and multicultural community sector is in a unique position to customise its services to directly benefit Victoria's multicultural population. As such, the sector provides complementary services that add value to government services and therefore do not constitute a cost burden.

25. ECCV does not have a clear preference for any one of the funding options presented in the discussion paper. The following benefits and limitations of the four funding models proposed in the discussion paper are based on ECCV stakeholder feedback, however further in-depth consultations are required to identify a suitable approach.

a. *Option: Client-based funding*

There is insufficient evidence to suggest that people from non-English speaking backgrounds would benefit from a client-based funding system.

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The majority of full pensioners in Victoria are from a culturally diverse background. ECCV feedback from pensioners' groups indicates that they are experiencing considerable financial hardship and would be unable to meet additional service costs.

ECCV acknowledges that the move towards person-centred care in areas such as aged care in the Victorian Home and Community Care (HACC) program has been a positive step. ECCV notes however that more time is required for adequate bilingual and culturally responsive information provision to introduce any type of person-centred approach to people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

ECCV believes the success of a client-based funding depends on supportive attitudes which in turn depend on high levels of community engagement. ECCV believes there have not been adequate levels of culturally responsive service delivery or engagement in the community sector beyond that provided through ethno-specific and multicultural organisations and some dedicated providers.

b. Option: Outcomes-based funding

ECCV points out that payment-by-results may not adequately reflect or be able to measure the range of culturally responsive support provided within the ethnic and multicultural sector.

ECCV notes that considerable time is required with people from non-English speaking backgrounds, especially people from refugee backgrounds, to achieve quality outcomes. Those outcomes, such as improved wellbeing, may need to be measured over a considerable period of time. Several face-to-face sessions with one non-English speaking person, or several family members with interpreters, are often required to provide adequate information and an understanding of service eligibility and support available.

c. Option: Consortia-based funding

To maintain the effectiveness and valuable cultural competency of the ethnic sector any form of consortia-based funding would need to be based on a grouping of ethno-specific and multicultural services.

ECCV points out that most ethnic and multicultural community service providers already cooperate and coordinate well across regular network meetings and committees. Based on these links, it is likely that any effective consortia could potentially pool the resources of ethno-specific and multicultural service providers within the ethnic sector to support both large and smaller organisations in their valuable culturally responsive work.

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d. Option: Area-based funding

ECCV notes that many ethno-specific organisations work effectively locally and across geographic areas to reach users with the same language and cultural backgrounds.

ECCV evidence-based research, the Practising Positive Partnerships model based on ECCV/Monash University research report *Practising Positive Partnerships in the Ethnic and Multicultural Community* (2010) highlighted that effective partnerships would require flexible funding conditions that are less geographically determined.

ECCV believes that further research and consultation is required to develop an appropriate funding model so that service users and the community services sector overall benefit for the important culturally responsive work of the ethnic and multicultural services sector.

Recommendation 6

That the CSO recognises the importance of retaining the important service provisions of the ethnic and multicultural community sector across a range of geographic areas.

Recommendation 7

That more in-depth exploration and further consultation takes place to ascertain the suitable funding models that maximise the culturally responsive services provided by the ethnic and multicultural sector.

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