

ECCV position paper on
Homelessness of seniors from a non-English speaking background

Homelessness

1. ECCV recognises the ongoing commitment by the Victorian Government on reducing homelessness.
2. ECCV is aware that homelessness is a major issue in our community, including people from a non-English speaking background.
3. ECCV is further aware that Victoria's population is increasingly ageing, therefore, homelessness among seniors will be one of the major challenges in the future.
4. ECCV notes that financial burdens and economic hardship are major factors that lead to homelessness among seniors including those from a non-English speaking background.
5. ECCV recognises that homeless persons are those
 - who are homeless,
 - at the risk of homelessness,
 - persons staying in temporary accommodation, rooming houses and severely overcrowded dwellings.

Concerns

6. ECCV is concerned that there is a shortage of affordable housing options such as public housing options for seniors, including those from a non-English speaking background.
7. ECCV is also concerned that the majority of full aged pensioners are from a non-English speaking background and struggle with cost of living pressures.
8. ECCV is further concerned that ethnic seniors living on pensions can increasingly not afford private rental accommodation.
9. ECCV is concerned that particularly families from new and emerging communities live in overcrowded dwellings with three generations living in the same unit.
10. ECCV understands that some ethnic seniors get homeless when their children or in-laws are no longer willing to host their parent or parent in-law.
11. ECCV has identified that mental health issues and financial elder abuse place seniors from a non-English speaking background at the risk of homelessness.

ECCV Diversity in Ageing Working Group Findings

12. ECCV understands that migrant resource and information centres are often the first point of call for homeless seniors from a non-English speaking background.
13. ECCV lobbies to increase the support for the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) programs at migrant resources centres and multicultural organisations.
14. ECCV understands that research in the area of homelessness of seniors from a non-English speaking background is underdeveloped.
15. ECCV advocates that targeted funding for social housing options for ethnic seniors is provided.
16. ECCV advocates that the access to ethno-specific and multicultural aged care services needs to be improved for seniors from a non-English speaking background.
17. ECCV recognises the importance of providing referral information and resources for ethno-specific and multicultural organisations which assist ethnic seniors who are at the risk of homelessness.
18. ECCV further recognises the need for a systemic approach to address homelessness of seniors from a non-English speaking background.
19. ECCV advocates for the development of strategy on homelessness targeted at seniors from a non-English speaking background.

Background

ECCV's Diversity in Ageing Working Group

Consultations with the ECCV's Diversity in Ageing Working Group on homelessness have identified some of the factors leading to homelessness among seniors from a non-English speaking background in Victoria. Research in the area is underdeveloped, that is why the consultation through the working group was very valuable in informing this paper.

Homeless population of seniors

According to the ABS 2011 Census, 30% of homeless persons in Australia were born overseas. On Census night 105,000 persons were counted as homeless in Australia, while 23,000 of them lived in Victoria. Homelessness has increased in Victoria by about 6,000. 2,000 of homeless persons in Victoria speak English not well or not at all. People 55 and over constitute approximately one-fifth of Australia's homeless population. Persons aged 50 and over are predicted to more than double numerically from 2010 to 2050 in Australia.

Victorian Government initiatives

The Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011 – 2015 highlights the need for prevention and early intervention. It further states that homeless persons should be able to access specific assistance independent of their age.