



ECCV aged care policy report

On

Regional ECCV-BRMC Aged Care Forum

On

Strengthening Diverse Ageing Communities

September 2013

1. Executive Summary

The Forum on Strengthening Diverse Ageing Communities was organised by the Ethnic Communities of Victoria and the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council. The Forum confirmed the need for culturally responsive services in regional Victoria. Key findings of the Forum include:

- Service provision needs to be more linguistically responsive
- The multicultural community needs to form partnerships to better meet the needs of their culturally diverse seniors
- There is a need for a central access point for service providers who work with culturally diverse seniors/clients
- Service providers and culturally diverse communities need to engage in a 'two way' dialogue to improve service delivery
- Volunteers are necessary to meet the needs of culturally diverse seniors. It is key to integrate younger volunteers
- Seniors are concerned about their personal safety
- Limited transport options contribute to social isolation
- Issue that older people from new and emerging communities now face appear to be similar to communities that have lived in the area for comparatively longer periods
- There are concerns about the lack of culturally appropriate food, such as meals on wheels and in residential care facilities.

2. Overview

The Forum on *Strengthening Diverse Ageing Communities* was organised in partnership by the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) and the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council (BRMC). The regional aged care Forum was held on 3 September 2013 in Ballarat at BRMC. More than 60 people attended the Forum. The Forum included presentations by ECCV Deputy Chairperson and Convenor of ECCV's Aged Care Policy Sub-Committee, Marion Lau OAM JP, Grace Roberto, Multicultural Officer at Alzheimer's Australia Victoria (AAV), and Lydia John and Julie Basco from the Filipino Community Council of Victoria (FCCVI). The Forum was opened by Ann Foley, Executive Officer at BRMC. The presentations were followed by a number of workshops. A joint workshop was facilitated by Marion Lau OAM JP on Ballarat's community's needs and gaps for current and emerging ageing communities. This was followed by workshops for service providers on how to improve access to services for culturally diverse seniors. Further workshops were held by community representatives on what support their ageing communities need. The Forum was closed by Dr Sundram Sivamalai, Chairperson BRMC, who sent greetings from the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia.

3. Background

The purpose of the Forum has been to inform ECCV on issues of regional aged care, to build the capacity of ECCV's regional members in aged care, and provide a regional input into a forthcoming ECCV's discussion paper on new and emerging ageing communities. The information gathered from the Forum will support ECCV advocacy work on issues of ethnic aged care. It allows ECCV to raise regional issues in variety of network meetings on federal, state, and regional level.

4. Summary of Consultations

The following questions were asked in the consultations:

- What are the needs of culturally diverse seniors in the Ballarat area?
- Do these needs differ from older people from new and emerging communities?
- What access barriers face seniors from culturally diverse communities in then Ballarat area?
- What can we do to support our culturally diverse seniors?
- How can we strengthen our community to appropriately support our culturally diverse seniors?
- What support to the community form outside is necessary?
- How can you improve the access of culturally diverse seniors to aged care services?
- What examples of culturally appropriate care exist in the Ballarat area?
- What support do service providers need to deliver culturally appropriate care?

Languages

Seniors from a non-English speaking background have articulated their preference of communicating in their first language and may feel uncomfortable communicating in English. Ethnic seniors would like staff and volunteers of visiting services to speak their first language. Service providers confirmed that there is a demand to employ bilingual staff who is capable of translating complex content. Service providers recommended identifying staff within their organisations who speak a language other than English. It was stressed that access to interpreting services needs to be improved and that costs for interpreting are high. There is no Ballarat based interpreting service as interpreters

need to travel from Melbourne to Ballarat. It is important to have access to the appropriate language. For example in the Sudanese community a variety of languages and dialects are spoken. Seniors from a non-English speaking background wish to attend English language classes. This may be particularly relevant to newer arrivals.

Recommendation 1

That service providers explore linguistically responsive services for clients from a non-English speaking background and that the community works towards improved access to interpreting services in the area.

Multicultural partnerships

Some community groups are very small, such as the Polish community. It will become increasingly important to link with other community groups. Participants recommended organising intercultural days or joint events at ethnic seniors clubs to build friendship and partnerships amongst members and organisations from different ethnic communities. Further, it was suggested to organise multicultural bus trips for seniors in order to get viable numbers. There is currently no multicultural or ethno-specific residential care facility in the Ballarat area. It has been recommended that the multicultural community works with the Council to establish a multicultural aged care facility. Also, it was mentioned that seniors would like to have the opportunity to visit a multicultural *space* which is safe and 'friendly'. In such a hub seniors could socialise, cook and engage in other social activities.

Recommendation 2

That ethnic communities work together towards building multicultural partnerships.

Culturally appropriate service delivery

Service providers emphasised the lack of available resources when working with culturally diverse seniors. It has been suggested to establish a gateway which allows service providers to access cultural specific resources and information on language specific services. Participants emphasised the need for a multicultural community directory on ethnic community groups, community services and organisations that support culturally diverse seniors. Also services targeted at culturally diverse seniors need to be better coordinated.

Recommendation 3

Explore cooperative and culturally appropriate service delivery approaches in the area.

Intergenerational links and Volunteering

Multicultural communities face the challenge of having to recruit more volunteers, including younger ones, to meet the needs of the ageing communities. Seniors and younger people live often 'apart' from each other. Stronger links between older and younger people need to be fostered. Community representative also mentioned that younger people might not have sufficient incentives to volunteer and that is important to talk to younger people about volunteering.

Recommendation 4

That communities look into strengthening the relationships between older and younger people such as through volunteering.

Community safety

Seniors from a non-English speaking background are concerned about their safety. Participants would like the local police and the City Council to be more active in ensuring a safe environment for seniors, especially at night, as a lot of vandalism is occurring. Also it was mentioned that relationships among neighbourhoods need to be strengthened so that people can support each other.

Recommendation 5

That local government develops strategies that address the concerns of seniors around community safety.

Social isolation and transport

Participants emphasised that social isolation of culturally diverse seniors is a major issue in the Ballarat area. Issues related to mobility are linked to social isolation. Seniors rely on limited public transport options as well as friends and family. Home visits to ethnic seniors are vital to overcome social isolation. It has been emphasised that group activities, including social outings, are fundamental for seniors to age well.

Recommendation 6

That Government supports seniors from a non-English speaking background to ensure better access to transport options.

Older people from new and emerging communities

Older people from new and emerging communities have similar needs as seniors from comparatively more established communities. It has been mentioned that presently there are limited options of worship for members of new and emerging communities as there is currently no Hindu temple or mosque in Ballarat. It was also recorded that members from new and emerging communities should work together as one multicultural interest group in order to have a 'stronger voice'.

Recommendation 7

That further attention is given to the particular needs of older people from new and emerging ageing communities in regional Victoria in order to better assess what challenges seniors from these communities face.

Culturally appropriate food

The consultation has confirmed that culturally appropriate food is vital for seniors from a non-English speaking background in ageing well. Participants emphasised that there should be more options available of culturally diverse food such as for *meals on wheels*. A woman from a Malaysian background who had moved into a nursing home missed the rice on the menu. Seniors from a non-English speaking background would like to receive care packages that include culturally appropriate food.

Recommendation 8

That the multicultural community in Ballarat works collaboratively on advocating for culturally appropriate food in meals on wheels services and in residential care facilities.

Dialogue and Partnership

Participants made the point that working together in partnership between service providers and culturally diverse communities is necessary to improve access of ethnic seniors to aged care services. In order to improve mutual understanding a genuine dialogue between the multicultural community and the providers is fundamental.

Recommendation 9

That partnerships between culturally diverse communities and service providers in the area are explored.

5. Summary of Presentations

Building the Capacity of Diverse Ageing Communities in Victoria

Marion Lau OAM JP, ECCV's Deputy Chairperson and Convenor of ECCV's Aged Care Policy Sub-Committee mentioned that it is a key priority of the ECCV to build the capacity of multicultural communities in Victoria. ECCV aims to empower ECCV members and the multicultural community as a whole including regional members of ECCV and people from non-English speaking background living in regional Victoria. Marion Lau OAM JP also indicated that the comments from the Forum will contribute a forthcoming ECCV discussion paper on new and emerging ageing communities. New and emerging ageing communities are those who have arrived to Australia more recently and their aged populations are yet to peak. Examples of these communities in the Ballarat area are Indian, Filipino, Sri Lankan and seniors from African communities.

She emphasised that seniors from a non-English speaking background face linguistic barriers in accessing information on aged care services. Culturally diverse seniors have varying levels of English and may revert to their mother tongue when ageing. Therefore access to information in their first language and on ethno-specific services providers is vital. The Monash-ECCV study *Mainstream versus ethno-specific services – It's not an either/or* has shown that culturally diverse seniors show preferences for ethno-specific services. Ethnic seniors feel more comfortable using culturally specific

services as they feel better understood in terms of their language, culture, spirituality, and ethnic identity.

ECCV advocates for the delivery of ethno-specific aged care services and there are various good examples of ethno-specific services in Melbourne, such as the Australian Greek Welfare Society. In a regional context, the multicultural aged care facility in Shepparton is an example how the multicultural community has worked together with a service providers to ensure that the cultural and linguistic needs of seniors from a non-English speaking background are met. Marion Lau OAM JP encouraged participants to talk to the Council to establish a multicultural aged care facility in Ballarat.

A Culturally Specific Service Approach

Lydia John, Planned Activity Group (PAG) Coordinator, and Julie Basco, Assistant PAG Coordinator, from the Filipino Community Council of Victoria (FCCVI) gave examples of ethno-specific service delivery. A primary goal of the FCCVI is to ensure that their clients remain independent and age well. The Filipino PAG group gives seniors the opportunity to meet with people who share a common culture, language and a history. A holistic approach is utilised and covers the following areas: dancing, social activities, mentally stimulating activities, spiritual activities, cooking and gardening. Ethno-specific PAG groups reduce social isolation. One client once wrote a song in which she mentioned that the PAG group made her feel at home and she felt like being in a family.

It was also emphasised how vital it is collaborate in partnership with other agencies when delivering aged care services for the Filipino community.

Creating Appropriate Resources and Responses

Grace Roberto, Multicultural Officer at Alzheimer's Australia Victoria, mentioned that brain changes with dementia present unique challenges to culturally diverse people living with dementia, families, carers and service providers. Alzheimer's *Perception of Dementia Project* aimed at investigating understanding of dementia within 13 different culturally and linguistically diverse communities, barriers to service access and to develop resources that seek to raise awareness of dementia in multicultural communities.

Outcomes of the project suggested that culturally diverse people living with dementia, families and carers are no homogenous group. There is much diversity within ethnic communities in relation to the understanding of dementia and the access to dementia services.

In culturally diverse communities stigma is strongly associated with dementia and may lead to isolation of the affected person or family. Translating the word dementia in different languages is complex and a sensitive issue as people may feel offended. For example the Arabic translation of dementia has a very negative connotation. Therefore resources need to be tailored to each community. More culturally appropriate services are necessary to better meet the needs of people with dementia from a non-English speaking background.

6. Evaluation

Survey Participants

29 people participated in the survey out of a total of about 62 Forum attendees. 11 survey participants stated that they were generic service providers and 10 from members of an ethnic community organisation. 4 attendees stated they were from an ethno-specific or multicultural service provider and 4 described themselves as 'other'.

Support of the Forum

The feedback from the survey indicates that the Forum was relevant to attendees and that the community supported the Forum. The majority of survey participants found the presentations and workshops to be useful and relevant. Also attendees were able to increase their understanding of diverse ageing communities in the Ballarat area. Participants stated that the contacts made the Forum will be useful. Further, attendees stated that their community benefited from the Forum. Details of responses are displayed in the table below:

Results from the following responses	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Neither agreed or disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
Overall the topics of the presentations were useful and relevant	16	13	1	0	0
Overall the topics of the workshops were useful and relevant	19	10	1	0	0
The Forum has increased my understanding of diverse ageing communities in the Ballarat area	9	21	1	0	0
The contacts and networks I made at the forum will be useful to me	5	21	3	0	0
My community benefitted from the Forum	8	17	0	0	0

Additional comments

- Two persons asked for a list of other service providers who attended the Forum
- Two people mentioned having hearing problems during the workshops
- Two participants mentioned that they would have liked more in-depths discussions
- Two attendees emphasised the need to follow up on issues raised at the Forum.

Issues of further interest

- Forum on positive partnership in Ballarat and annual diversity Forum in Ballarat
- A forum on specific ethnic communities
- A Polish specific Forum/ information
- A Forum on volunteer transport service for older people
- Forum on young multicultural involvement
- Elder abuse prevention
- Healthy ageing
- Financial support in hardship
- Informative get-togethers.

7. Suggested Follow-up

The Forum provided ECCV and BRMC into insight of issues relevant to culturally diverse seniors and service providers working with seniors from a non-English background. It will allow ECCV and BRMC to a more informed advocacy on issues around ethnic aged care in the Ballarat area and within a wider regional context.

It is suggested that ECCV and BRMC discuss the outcome of the Forum.

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