



ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria

ECCV

State Election

Manifesto

2014

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Inc. (ECCV) is *the Voice of Multicultural Victoria*. As the peak 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 40 years we have been the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community.

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Introduction

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV), *the Voice of Multicultural Victoria*, calls on all political parties contesting the 2014 Victorian election to make a pre-election commitment to the claims presented in this State Election Manifesto.

The ECCV is the peak body for ethnic and multicultural organisations in Victoria. It is a community based, member driven organisation committed to empowering people from diverse multicultural backgrounds.

Victoria's population is among the most diverse in Australia making it a vibrant multicultural society. In a climate where immigration trends are changing and public attitudes show an increase in discrimination (Scanlon Report 2013), our election claims respond to the emerging needs of new arrivals and refugees from fast growing source countries as well as the needs of older migrant communities with a long history of contributing to Victorian society.

ECCV's election claims uphold the principles and philosophy of the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011. They focus on the three R's of social justice and cultural diversity (2013 inaugural lecture, UNESCO Chair, Cultural Diversity and Social Justice, Deakin University) that are:

- **Redistribution** of resources to improve fair and equitable access for Victoria's large multicultural population.
- **Recognition** of culturally diverse Victorians through real service responses to their cultural and language needs and effective partnerships.
- **Representation** by giving a voice to culturally diverse Victorians to maximise their participation in the social, cultural, economic and political domains of life.

Language Services

Victorians have varying levels of English language proficiency. About 26 per cent of Victoria's population were born overseas in non-main English-speaking countries and almost a quarter speak 260 languages other than English at home. Many are functionally illiterate. According to the ECCV Health Literacy Discussion Paper: *An Investment not an Expense – enhancing health literacy in culturally and linguistically diverse communities* (2012), Victorians from non-English speaking backgrounds have low health literacy and tend to access health and aged care services at a point of crisis.

ECCV applauds the Victorian Government's significant investment in interpreting and translating services. The demand for interpreters, however, remains far greater than the availability (APESMA 2012). In some departments and funded agencies, the budgets for language services fail to keep pace with the demand. As a result many Victorians with low English proficiency are less likely to access services and are unable to make informed health and wellbeing decisions, diminishing their quality of life.

Election Claim 1

That your political party commit to increasing the language services credit lines of government departments and funded agencies to meet the increasing client need.

A Commemorative Sculpture

Victorian multiculturalism is a remarkable success. Victoria's multicultural landscape is increasingly more visible with ethnic festivals, temples, and multicultural centres. ECCV is proud to have been the key advocate for culturally diverse communities since 1974 throughout the rise of multiculturalism in Victoria and celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2014. ECCV believes that a public monument symbolising the remarkable and vibrant social, cultural, economic and political contributions of migrants and refugees in Victoria would publically recognise the reality of our State's multicultural identity and promote social cohesion.

ECCV believes it is fitting for the Victorian Government to leave a landmark legacy for all Victorians by commissioning a cultural diversity sculpture to recognise how Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds have significantly generated such remarkable creativity, efficiency and vibrancy in a diligent and undramatic way.

Election Claim 2

That your political party, if elected commission a commemorative sculpture in recognition of the valuable contribution of Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds to the State.

Anti-Racism Strategy

ECCV applauds the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (2010) and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (2006) that protect people from culturally diverse backgrounds, from discrimination and harassment in a wide range of settings including workplaces, schools and service provision. ECCV recognises that racial discrimination and religious vilification still exists in some workplaces and supports the valuable work of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission in the areas of community engagement, education and dispute resolution. ECCV is seeking Victorian Government commitment and leadership to support and advance anti-racism strategies in broad-based areas of employment and public life.

Election Claim 3

That your political party make a public commitment to working closely with public authorities, organisations and employers to eliminate racial discrimination and to help them meet their obligations under the Charter and equal opportunity laws.

Aged Care

The landmark Victorian Government Service Sector Reforms affirmed the need for culturally responsive services. It includes recommendations for greater partnerships between government and non-government providers as well as a strong push for consumer directed choice. Outer suburban growth corridors in the Melbourne metropolitan local government areas are experiencing significant increases in ageing culturally diverse populations. ECCV believes that partnerships are a key to effective solutions to cost-effective, culturally responsive aged care.

Local pilot programs are important to harness multicultural communities and develop local solutions. Support for local partnerships with the ethnic community sector would maximise culturally responsive expertise and engagement. Whilst considerable goodwill exists around creating working partnerships with local government, the lack of resources for community development work limits the development of sustainable partnerships.

Existing HACC (Home and Community Care) south eastern Cultural Diversity Networks, with key players such as migrant resource centres, ethnic organisations and the Victorian Department of Health provide the ideal basis to pilot culturally responsive area-based consortia, in line with the sector reforms. Such a pilot program would improve partnerships with local government and could then be replicated in other outlying local government areas. ECCV is well placed to coordinate such a pilot program.

Election Claim 4

That your political party commit to the redistribution of resources to conduct a pilot culturally responsive area-based aged care partnership to be replicated in outer suburban growth areas.

Women and Children

ECCV community feedback indicates that there is an over-representation of women from culturally diverse backgrounds accessing crisis services for family violence. Furthermore those women are not encountering services that are sufficiently culturally and linguistically appropriate resulting in increased numbers of women from non-English speaking backgrounds, as compared with other Australian women, returning to those who have perpetrated violence against them. The ECCV policy research paper *Women Surviving Violence – cultural competencies in critical services* (2013) recommends empowering culturally diverse women in family violence prevention programs to educate family violence service providers.

Election Claim 5

That your political party commit to the redistribution of State Government resources to strengthen community-based culturally diverse women’s leadership and family violence prevention programs to build on existing support structures and pathways.

Data Collection

It is a requirement under the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 that all Victorian Government departments report annually on multicultural achievements and initiatives. The Act requires each Department to report annually on:

- the use of interpreting and translating services
- communications in languages other than English and communications in the multicultural media
- any major improvements made or initiatives developed that promote multiculturalism in Victoria and meet the identified needs of Victoria's culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including the identified needs of youth, older persons and women within these communities
- the extent to which people from different cultural and linguistically backgrounds were represented on boards and committees
- progress under its cultural diversity plan
- any initiatives developed to meet the identified needs of diverse communities in rural and regional areas
- any measures taken to promote human rights in accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006.

This is an important mechanism that provides guidance on the extent to which Victorian government departments are consistently improving their service delivery. One limitation of the current system is the lack of a coherent and systematic approach to the collection of relevant culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) data. This data will make comparisons possible and make clear where resources should be directed to make improvements.

Election Claim 6

That your political party commit to developing and implementing a coherent, systematic CALD data collection system within the Victoria public sector linked to the reporting requirements of the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011.

Multicultural Arts

Victoria's multicultural population generates remarkable creativity, efficiency and vibrancy by recognising, engaging, promoting and presenting performers of world music and multi-discipline artists. The showcasing of Victoria's prolific multicultural arts makes a significant contribution to promoting inter-cultural dialogue, cross cultural understanding and community harmony. For example annual Harvest Festivals play a key role in promoting the wellbeing and strong sense of belonging for Australians from the Africa region.

ECCV believes the development of a Victorian Multicultural Arts Centre is an innovative and important initiative for the Victoria. It will enhance the commercial potential of diverse multicultural arts and artists and provide mainstream Victoria with opportunities to experience high-quality, culturally diverse arts events such as Ethno Australia, World Café Music events, the Harvest Festival, the Transcultural Dance Festival 2013 as well as creative, fun culturally-based workshops for the general public.

The new BEMAC, a Queensland Multicultural Arts Centre, provides a model for Victoria to consider. It enhances the commercial potential of diverse multicultural arts and artists and attracts generous support from corporate and community partnerships. Its core services include grants assistance, artistic careers guidance, volunteering and work-placements opportunities.

Election Claim 7

That your political party commit to ensuring your legacy to the state of Victoria by commissioning the development of a Victorian Multicultural Arts Centre.

For more information contact Dr Irene Bouzo, Senior Policy Officer at email ibouzo@eccv.org.au and telephone 03 9349 4122