



ECCV Victorian State Budget Review 2015

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) has come out strongly in support of the Victorian Budget - but wants to know more about details of specific funding for multicultural communities and programs. The Budget contains significant gains for multicultural Victoria including commitments for \$74 million to bolster multicultural affairs and social cohesion with cultural diversity clearly acknowledged as making our economy and society stronger.

The allocation of \$350 million to the TAFE system has the potential to make a real difference in terms of educational outcomes for many young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. \$13.2 million will be spent to enhance community capacity and participation for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, with programs to support newly arrived migrants and refugees, as well as young people, women and seniors which ECCV welcomes.

One of the Budget's themes is "A Welcoming and Harmonious Victoria" which suggests a whole-of-government approach to strengthening and supporting multiculturalism and cultural diversity within this state, and this is something that should be celebrated. ECCV Chairperson Eddie Micallef says that "The issue of family violence

Patron

The Right Hon Malcolm Fraser AC, CH,
former Prime Minister of Australia

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria

Statewide Resources Centre
150 Palmerston Street, Carlton VIC 3053
ABN 65071572705 | Incorporations Number A0027904K

T: (03) 9349 4122
F: (03) 9349 4967
E: eccv@eccv.org.au
www.eccv.org.au

has been covered extensively in the media in recent times, and the effects on diverse communities is recognised with \$2 million over two years to support women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse communities who are victims of or vulnerable to family violence.”

The need for initiatives focused on youth sees the Government spending \$2 million to reinforce Victoria’s social cohesion and community resilience with programs to counter violent extremism.” Mr Micallef has commented that this is a complex issue which needs a multifaceted approach and does not relate exclusively to young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Multicultural Specific Funding

SOCIAL COHESION

\$20.7 million (over 4 years) social cohesion and community harmony

A range of activities will be funded to support social cohesion, community engagement and harmony in Victoria. This will include grants for initiatives that promote intercultural understanding, and for cultural events and festivals that celebrate and preserve Victoria’s cultural diversity.

Support for the Victorian Multicultural Commission to run Cultural Diversity Week, one of Victoria’s largest multicultural celebrations, will be continued, as well as the Multicultural Awards for Excellence. This initiative contributes to the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s Multicultural Affairs Policy and Programs output.

ECCV COMMENT

The larger block of multicultural-specific funding in the Budget is allocated to ‘social cohesion’ within which are core elements including community harmony, community resilience, and prevention of radicalisation and extremism. ECCV strongly supports investment in maintaining the cornerstone events and programs that support Victoria’s place as the home of multiculturalism in Australia.

At the same time, we recognise through our community consultation and policy work that this is a complex issue. It is clear that the detail of this investment needs to be provided early to take advantage of the experiences of other countries and international best practice.

The innovation of ECCV’s consultation and policy development process was recognised when we were invited to share insights from our process at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2012.

Since then community feedback has seen ECCV’s Policy Unit initiate roundtable discussions on intergenerational relationships in new and emerging

communities while developing a series of consultations for 2015-16 that explore social cohesion using an innovative lens developed in collaboration with culturally diverse communities.

\$25.2 million to reinforce Victoria’s social cohesion and community resilience

This initiative combines a whole-of-government and evidence-based approach to draw upon local, national and international best practice to counter violent extremism and foster social cohesion. The Minister for Multicultural Affairs will facilitate collective action, across government and in partnership with community groups, to develop a range of social cohesion initiatives.

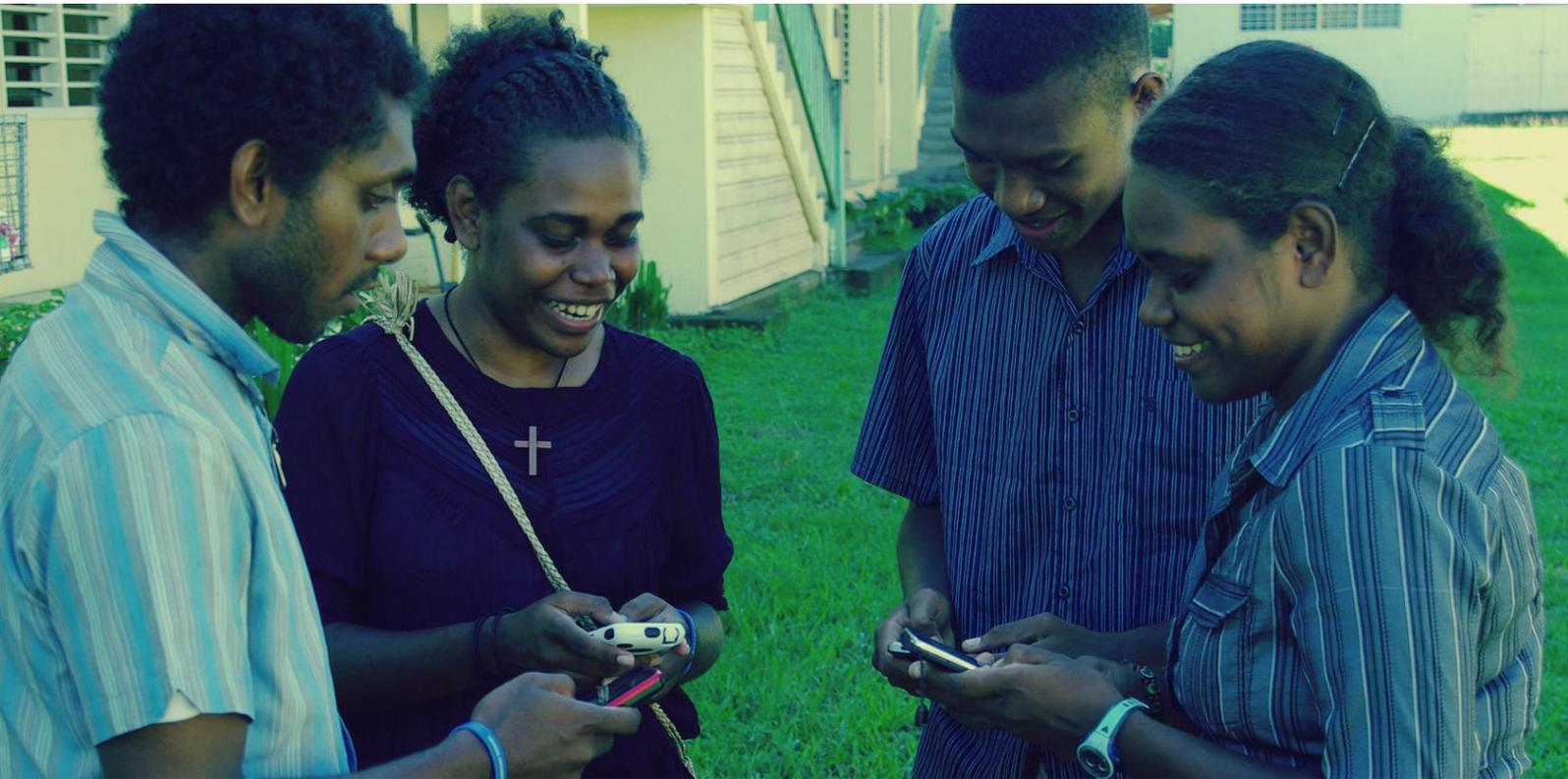
These initiatives will support, engage and empower communities to address economic and social disengagement that may lead to individual or community isolation, anti-social behaviour or violent extremism with a particular focus on youth. This initiative contributes to the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s Multicultural Affairs Policy and Programs output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV is conscious of the links between community harmony and social cohesion and radicalisation and extremism as one of many problems that result when community cohesion breaks down. Unemployment, a lack of education and training opportunities, racism, family conflict, migration and sometimes the very programs designed to help the problem can sometimes increase the isolation of young people in our society.

We are conscious that a wealth of knowledge and experience in radicalisation prevention programs already exist in other countries and we are in the process of integrating these reports into ECCV’s ongoing consultation on intergenerational relationships.

As the two funding streams under social cohesion are very close (community harmony and community



resilience), ECCV would like to see more detail as soon as possible on how far Government initiatives adopt evaluations of similar programs in other countries.

Until then, establishing and strengthening existing institutions that reinforce anti-discrimination, human rights and fair work laws will also support social cohesion. ECCV representatives sit on four working reference groups with the Victoria Police to support their understanding of issues such as racial profiling and interfaith issues.

BUILDING CAPACITY

\$13.2 million to enhance community capacity and participation for people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

A range of activities will be funded to support the capacity of ethnic and multicultural organisations to respond to community needs including the settlement and participation of newly arrived migrants, and the needs of ageing migrant communities. These include funding for the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, the Australian Greek Welfare Society and the Vietnamese Dual Identity Leadership Program. This initiative contributes to the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Multicultural Affairs Policy and Programs output.

ECCV COMMENT

While acknowledging our gratitude to be able to continue to support culturally diverse communities in Victoria, ECCV understands that many organisations need greater investment in community capacity building to remain viable. We have initiated our own community education programs - the ECCV New and Emerging Communities Forum: Leading the Way - to explore how these communities can better advocate to government and other organisations to improve the lives of their community. This is a ground-breaking policy project because community members are involved in the organising and design of the forum which empowers them beyond the role of 'audience'. We continue to consult about community capacity and participation through ECCV's New and Emerging Communities Policy Sub-Committee.

The Futures Project

ECCV is responding to a need within the community sector to ensure multicultural and ethno-specific organisations can retain and grow their sustainability, viability and value in the not-for-profit sector.

Our Futures Project will provide strategic and practical support over three years to improve the governance of organisations that make up the bulk of the ECCV membership.

This project will provide information, resources and opportunities which will work to build the confidence of ethnic and multicultural organisations to actively

participate and contribute to the social, cultural and economic vibrancy of community life in Victoria. The project is supported by The Scanlon Foundation & The Ruth Watchorn Estate managed by Equity Trustees and will run until June 2016. ECCV will lead the Futures Project and will work with partners including the Australian Multicultural Foundation and Leadership Victoria to establish ongoing mentorship.

LANGUAGE SERVICES

\$2 million for the Multicultural Access Program

Language services will be the focus of a range of funded initiatives to improve the access and responsiveness of government services for Victorians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Cultural competence training for government service providers will be promoted through the framework of cultural diversity planning. Language services will include interpreters and translators and cultural competency will include cultural diversity planning and cultural competence training. Language scholarships will also be available for students to become qualified interpreters.

This initiative contributes to the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Multicultural Affairs Policy and Programs output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV understands the dynamics that occur in the interface between culturally and linguistically diverse citizens and their government services. We are also aware that the cultural competence of government service providers is part of the recommendations made by The Victorian Auditor General's Office's (VAGO) - Victorian Auditor General's report on access to services for migrant asylum seekers and refugees. This report acknowledges that migrants with low English proficiency and refugees and asylum seekers still face significant challenges in accessing Victorian Government services.

The provision of interpreters is central to this audit and we support the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship's (OMAC) leadership on this program as part of their whole-of-government social cohesion strategy.

VAGO's reports acknowledged the critical value of cultural diversity policies and programs that are informed by systematic or ongoing data analysis. In the absence of language services and cultural competence, this audit demonstrates that barriers to across-government diversity remain high. ECCV has been

advocating for many years to establish and collect data from culturally diverse clients as part of their measurement and evaluation process. Supporting our position on data collection, the VAGO report explained:

"Departments do not routinely collaborate. There is evidence of networking, coordination and cooperating, but there is limited evidence of consistent, systematic cross-department collaboration leading to improved outcomes for CALD communities. The advantages of a whole-of-government approach, as listed above, are not being realised." (P.34, VAGO, 2014).

The language service gaps identified by the audit are a strong reason to recurrently fund the Multicultural Access Program beyond one year. Further, ECCV has worked closely with both interpreters and translators in its community education projects and understands that they are a vastly underpaid and under-appreciated workforce that is shrinking as more are leaving due to the poor remuneration and working conditions.

Our support for interpreters and translators sits side by side with our advocacy to departments and local government to invest more in bilingual employees. All are important in closing the gap in language services. Without bicultural skills, however, meaning can be lost in translation and disadvantage culturally and linguistically diverse people with patients in health, aged care and the justice system the most extreme examples. We will explain more about this in relation to the funding for the Social and Community Services Equal Remuneration Order.

We have also made verbal submissions on reviews of consumer codes and services to the Essential Services Commission and will continue to advocate to ensure language services and bi-cultural skills remain central to service delivery in Victoria.

ARTS & CULTURE

\$200,000 House of World Cultures feasibility study

Multicultural Arts Victoria [MAV] will undertake a feasibility study exploring the viability of establishing a House of World Cultures at the Princes Pier as a permanent creative cultural hub celebrating Victoria's history of migration and new diversity through the arts. This initiative contributes to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources' Access, Industry Development and Innovation output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV celebrates investment in community cohesion and recognises that continuing to fund cultural events and festivals that celebrate Victorian multiculturalism is part of this state's successful history of social cohesion. We are pleased to see funding for MAV to undertake this feasibility study and ECCV looks forward to working closely with MAV on this exciting concept.

\$11.1 million (over 4 years) to maintain or build community infrastructure and to enhance cultural precincts

The Community Infrastructure and Cultural Precincts Fund will help to build or refurbish community facilities for improved access by multicultural groups, and to enhance cultural precincts to promote local heritage, business activity and tourism. The Fund includes contributions to: upgrade the Beth Weizmann Jewish Community Centre; establish an Indian Cultural Precinct in Melbourne; support a feasibility study for a Vietnamese community museum; and provide equipment grants to multicultural media. This initiative contributes to the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Multicultural Affairs Policy and Programs output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV is very pleased to see investment across a range of new cultural precincts as well as grants to ensure that multicultural media maintain their sustainability. We look forward to the development of a new Indian community precinct which reflects their current role as the biggest migration point in Victoria. Their new precinct will contribute to the current list of precincts which include: Victoria Street Gateway (Richmond), Afghan Bazaar Streetscape Enhancement Project (Dandenong), Eaton Mall (Oakleigh), Little Saigon (Footscray), Welcome Arch (Footscray), Springvale Asian Gateway (Springvale), Chinatown's Little Bourke Street (Melbourne), Greek precinct, Lonsdale Street (Melbourne) and the Italian precinct, Lygon Street (Melbourne).

\$1.4 million for connecting to the world through film

The Government will continue to support the Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund and the Indian Film Festival, and contribute to a Chinese Film Festival. This initiative contributes to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources' Access, Industry Development and Innovation output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV congratulates members of Victoria's vibrant cultural industries sector with continued funding for these film festivals which attract global as well as local interest in culturally diverse arts in Victoria. From a local perspective, we hope to see more opportunities for greater representation of ethnic actors and technicians in the local film industry. We would also like to see further grants made available as part of a more innovative and creative way of exploring the narrative of social cohesion by involving communities themselves.

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

\$2 million (over 2 years) to support women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse communities who are victims of or vulnerable to family violence

Services that respond to women and children experiencing family violence will be provided with additional funding to ensure that they can provide assistance in a culturally appropriate manner. Support will also be provided to CALD communities to encourage access to family violence support services. \$81 million is allocated to support the Royal Commission into Family Violence and a range of survivor support programs; \$250 million will be used to strengthen the child protection and family services system including additional workers; and Victoria's Ice Action Plan will spend \$45 million. This initiative contributes to the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Multicultural Affairs Policy and Programs output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV is aware of the intersection of issues that contribute to family and domestic violence among culturally and linguistically diverse families. We have been consulting on issues around culturally diverse families through our Women's Policy Sub-Committee, New and Emerging Communities Policy Sub-Committee and, more recently, a forum on culturally diverse men's health issues. We look forward to seeing more detail from OMAC that reflects issues raised by the sector.

Having consulted and contributed policy recommendations to strengthen culturally diverse families since 2009, ECCV welcomes the *Report of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry Chapter 13* (also known as the *Cummins Report*). This was the first time in any vulnerable children's inquiry that there was a chapter based solely on culturally and

linguistically diverse children. Chapter 13 looks at the challenges and barriers facing parents and vulnerable children from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds and provides recommendations accordingly.

ECCV Policy Unit raised several issues with the Inquiry including: the lack of data on the rates of abuse and neglect of children in culturally diverse communities; a lack of cultural competence in Out of Home Care and foster care programs; the absence of culturally diverse children in The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009; and The current Victorian Government strategy *Victoria's Vulnerable Children Our Shared Responsibility Strategy 2013 – 2022* does not include a separate requirement for culturally diverse children.

Future work will emerge from a joint ECCV/Commission for Children and Young People Strategic Partnership Advisory Committee, which includes high level departmental representatives from Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Out of Home Care, Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood (DEECD), Victoria Police, Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VicSEG), Care With Me, Refugee Health Network and Refugee Health Nurse Program.

ECCV and VicSEG organised a consultation roundtable on behalf of the Commission and the ECCV roundtable recommendations were included as part of Chapter 13.

From our consultation with ethno-specific crisis service providers, we know that ethno-specific data collection remains a major gap to identify in terms of allocating funds that achieve immediate relief from danger for women and children in diverse communities. The natural response for community is for carers and volunteers to fill this gap but they need urgent training to provide appropriate response and referral to the right services. As the Budget acknowledges a lack of these services an argument exists to prioritise some part of this funding for immediate training of volunteers.

\$1.2 million for family violence duty lawyers at community legal centres

Additional family violence duty lawyers will be provided to support victims, particularly women and children, in the Magistrates' Court. This initiative contributes to the Department of Justice and Regulation's Access to Justice and Support Services output.

ECCV COMMENT

Additional funding will see \$1.2 million for family violence duty lawyers at community legal centres which ECCV strongly supports. There are two key issues we would like to raise here. As with its recommendations in the *Cummins Report*, the capacity for trained staff to identify issues of family violence in culturally diverse families is still developing in the area of law.

The joint ECCV and Commission for Children and Young People Strategic Partnership Advisory Committee must look at the contact points which identify the problem and ensure that culturally diverse families have equal access to services and legal support. Including data collection in this service will inform its evaluation. ECCV sees ongoing funding as an option if it can be linked to real outcomes for families.

The other issue is the under-funding of the community legal centre sector overall. ECCV strongly supports investment in the sector if expectations are that they will be able to identify and support culturally diverse families as part of their heavy workloads.

\$2.1 million for family violence legal assistance

\$2 million (across 2 years) for men's behaviour change programs – Corrections Victoria

Free family violence legal advice and support services will be continued to ensure proper representation for family violence related matters. This initiative contributes to the Department of Justice and Regulation's Access to Justice and Support Services output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV would like to see more detail on the type of legal assistance to be provided and, as with funding for duty lawyers, recommend that the \$2.1 million include language services and cultural competence training.

Further scope is also needed to include expansion of men's behaviour change education programs and the \$2 million investment for men's behaviour change programs is much needed to develop programs where ECCV consultations show culturally diverse men's health needs are not being well met and more consultation on this issue is needed.

Ethno-specific data collection is also missing in the recording of men's offending rates and conviction patterns in Victoria that link to family and domestic violence. This affects the ability to design culturally

appropriate men's behaviour change programs. Men's groups for the Vietnamese community have existed for 6 years and there are some Arabic men's groups trying to start up, but funding of men's group where men can go for preventative support in the cycle of family violence is largely self-funded by the crisis support sector. ECCV would like to see more funding on a recurrent basis.

YOUTH

\$8 million (over 4 years) for youth participation and engagement

Funding will continue for a number of programs that aim to enhance youth participation and engagement: the Centre for Multicultural Youth [CMY] to support multicultural youth to build leadership skills and navigate education and employment pathways; Scouts and Guides to deliver activities targeting young people in public housing estates; and additional support for regional and rural councils to run forums and information sessions to support youth engagement.

In addition, funding is provided to reconnect disadvantaged young people with education and employment pathways to build and enhance connections with their communities, and for the Youth

Affairs Council of Victoria to deliver two new regional offices in areas of identified need to provide services and support for regional young people. This initiative contributes to the Department of Health and Human Services' Youth Affairs output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV congratulates CMY on its successful funding to continue its valuable work representing the views of multicultural youth in Victoria. CMY's Regional Presence Project also supports regional youth from settlement and refugee communities in engaging with work, school, family and community life which promotes their sense of wellbeing and belonging.

ECCV's social cohesion consultation explores the intergenerational aspects of young people's disconnection from their families and community as occurs in the interaction between parents, young people, technology, immigration, the media, Victorian society and the global context, and will contextualise their experiences with international best practice to inform our future advocacy on young people.

We are also working with Deakin University on research on intergenerational relationships to inform our consultation. This multi-disciplinary approach will inform future ECCV policy briefing papers as the issue of culturally diverse youth is both complex and evolving and requires a more responsive consultation process.



Across-Government Issues Affecting Diverse Communities

Outside of commitments that specifically target Victoria's multicultural communities, ECCV broadly supports the 2015-16 Budget's increased funding for service delivery. Clearly, opportunities now exist to respond in practice to ECCV's consistent advocacy and community consultation on equitable access to government services. A priority in this ECCV Budget Review is the need to invest in language services and cultural competency training for service providers in both government and non-government sectors. The following Budget categories are included as ECCV advocates across multiple government portfolios. A summary from the Budget is followed by comment from ECCV Policy Unit.

AGED CARE

\$6.8 million for Home and Community Care (HACC) services indexation

Increased funding is provided for Home and Community Care (HACC) services to enable the continued provision of community care services such as domestic assistance, personal care, home nursing and allied health services for frail older people, younger people with disabilities and their carers. This initiative contributes to the Department of Health and Human Services' HACC Primary Health, Community Care and Support output.

ECCV COMMENT

This funding is only for one year due to the transition of the majority of Victoria's HACC program to the

Commonwealth as part of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. While ECCV is pleased about short-term funding for HACC, it remains concerned about a number of issues identified through community consultation with culturally diverse communities.

ECCV continues to advocate for the accessibility and cultural responsiveness of aged care assessment and service provision - particularly for new and emerging communities. We have found that inflexible individualised funding under Consumer Directed Care (CDC) will lead to gaps in meeting the care needs of older clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Based on these concerns we have written directly to the Commonwealth Government in consultation with multicultural organisations and ethno-specific services providers.

Social isolation by older migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds can be prevented by culturally appropriate information about aged care services from multicultural media, family, community networks, ethno-specific organisations, bilingual/bicultural access and support workers, and the recently defunded Community Partners Program.

\$40.3 million (across 4 years) for Homelessness Innovation Action Projects

Homelessness innovation action projects will continue to use innovative approaches to early intervention for individuals at risk of homelessness. Approximately 2,000 clients are assisted annually, including young people, families, older people and women and children experiencing family violence. Services include support for those at risk of losing their tenancy, assistance in securing and maintaining affordable accommodation, and providing links to employment and personal support programs. This initiative contributes to the Department of Health and Human Services' Housing Assistance output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV celebrates the full funding for four years for Housing for the Aged Action Group's (HAAG) 'Home at Last Program'. ECCV is a partner with HAAG on the Preventing Homelessness in Older CALD Communities Project that is a 12 month project funded by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation with the key aim to prevent homelessness among older people from culturally diverse communities. A focus of this project is on communities with a high percentage of renters.

The ECCV HACC Sectoral Development Officer continues to strengthen relationships between ethno-specific HACC Access and Support Workers and the new Commonwealth aged care assessment services.

\$2.5 million for the Chinese aged care land bank

The Chinese aged care land bank will address the need for culturally appropriate aged care in the Victorian Chinese community by providing a site for a non-profit residential aged care facility. The Department of Health and Human Services will work with the Chinese community to identify a number of potential locations. Funding will be provided once a suitable site is found.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV welcomes the Victorian Government's investment in ethnic-specific aged care facilities. We look forward to a continued interest in maintaining high standards in residential aged care infrastructure, especially for non-

profit residential aged care facilities aimed at diverse communities in Victoria.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

\$4 million (over 4 years) for International Student Welfare Grants

These grants will offer financial support to organisations assisting international students in need, or who are facing welfare issues. This initiative contributes to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources' Tourism, Major Events and International Education output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV recognises the need for greater support to international students and the organisations that assist them. In our March 2015 submission to the Productivity Commission ECCV highlighted the disadvantages experienced by vulnerable workers from culturally diverse backgrounds such as international students. Stronger monitoring is needed of employers that contravene employees' rights, for example through 'sham contracting' arrangements with international student cleaners that lead to underpayment and unsafe work conditions.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL & GAMBLING

\$148 million for Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation will continue to provide treatment services for individuals affected by problem gambling and to foster responsible gambling practices in the broader community. The Foundation is a statutory entity that works to reduce the prevalence of problem gambling and minimise harm from gambling. This initiative contributes to the Department of Justice and Regulation's Gambling and Liquor Regulation and Racing Industry Development output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV has been active in consulting with multicultural Victorians facing gambling problems for several years and sits on the community reference group for Responsible Gambling Awareness Week, and is on the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Committee (RGMAC). The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation has been active in providing tailored,

culturally appropriate services including multilingual counselling and community education in partnership with the community. We see a need to direct more funding into identifying gambling problems within culturally diverse communities and how this affects families and social cohesion.

During Responsible Gambling Awareness Week in 2014 we held a forum - Let's Talk about Gambling in Multicultural Communities - where research into the attitudes different multicultural communities held towards gambling was launched, and we have since held a number of successful gambling awareness forums to regional culturally diverse communities.

Recommendations from our forums included that culturally responsive informative/educative campaigns be targeted at multicultural and ethnic communities to promote an understanding of responsible gambling, and that Gambler's Help services be made more culturally responsive and multilingual. ECCV is aware of issues in several communities where more funding is needed to target gambling problems and data collection through the court system is needed to identify where to best direct these funds.

\$45 million for Victoria's Ice Action Plan

\$45 million will be spent to implement Victoria's Ice Action Plan which is a package of new initiatives to reduce the supply, demand and harm caused by ice. The plan has been developed on the advice of the Premier's Ice Action Taskforce and builds on the Victorian Parliament's 2014 inquiry into the supply and use of methamphetamines.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV welcomes the Victorian Government's Ice Action Plan which includes \$18.2 million to expand drug treatment, while focusing on rehabilitation for users in rural and regional areas. An added \$1 million will be spent on frontline workers which ECCV supports, however we are conscious that culturally diverse drug and alcohol issues have been under-researched and further community consultation is needed in this area.

No mention of culturally diverse initiatives in regional programs was made nor was tackling the problem from the perspective of ethnic communities or their leaders.

\$400,000 for community ice action groups

Grants will be provided to communities across regional Victoria to help conduct forums, promote education and evaluate effective local strategies to address the increasing harm of ice. This initiative contributes to the

Department of Health and Human Services' Drug Prevention and Control output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV would like to see grant criteria include scope for applications that target ethnic-specific forums, education and awareness campaigns that involve these communities in the message.

\$400,000 (across 2 years) for training and supervision for workers

A standard best practice training curriculum will be developed for frontline workers to better equip them to respond to people affected by ice. This initiative contributes to the Department of Health and Human Services' Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV sees this investment in frontline workers as an opportunity to focus on bilingual and bicultural workers who can identify and establish a platform of questions that ECCV can use in their community consultation.

ENERGY

\$17.6 million for energy efficiency and productivity

Energy efficiency and productivity programs will lower the pressure on household energy bills, support jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A review of the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target scheme will be undertaken, focusing on options to strengthen the scheme to maximise the benefits to Victorian households and businesses. A Residential Efficiency Scorecard program will deliver an energy rating tool to measure and assess energy usage, helping households identify opportunities to improve efficiency. This initiative contributes to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources' Energy and Resources output.

ECCV COMMENT

There has been little community engagement to address the understanding and concerns about energy consumption, conservation and impact of rising energy costs among culturally and linguistically diverse householders. Some reports indicate that the impact of rising energy costs on families have doubled with the impact of climate change resulting in significant stress and confusion by householders.



ECCV's Multicultural Communities Energy Education Project in partnership with the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport has identified a lack of consumer engagement and consultation on energy costs for consumers from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

With reports that one in eight Australians are experiencing bill stress, ECCV is undertaking a project to deliver a bilingual community education program that will give practical advice on how to reduce costs and energy use on household electricity bills. It will also raise awareness on renewable energy and climate change. ECCV has also made a submission about these barriers faced by multicultural consumers to the Commission for Essential Services.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

\$350 million for Education and Training – including the TAFE Back to Work Fund

The 2015-16 Budget makes the largest investment in education in the state's history, all of which contributes to opportunities for children from multicultural communities across Victoria. Over \$2.9 billion is provided to lift funding levels of schools facing increased enrolments; with \$688 million for schools capital investment to regenerate school facilities across Victoria.

\$300 million will support the TAFE Rescue Fund to reopen closed TAFE campuses, upgrade buildings, workshops, labs and classrooms, and support institutes under financial stress; and \$50 million is provided to establish the TAFE *Back to Work Fund* to ensure TAFEs better meet the training needs of businesses that hire unemployed youth, the long term unemployed and retrenched workers.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV welcomes investment in the State's education and training program to support job creation for employees from culturally diverse communities. The Back to Work youth employment initiative will be the responsibility of the Treasurer the Hon Tim Pallas and consist of \$100 million for 'payroll tax relief' for employers.

There is insufficient evidence about how these employer incentives benefit skilled migrants who are underemployed or non-vocational young people from culturally diverse and refugee backgrounds who are unemployed. ECCV would like to see these new resources moved to community-based 'work ready' training that is targeted at young people from culturally diverse backgrounds who could benefit from mentoring and work placements.

We would like a specific and targeted allocation of resources for culturally and linguistically diverse young people within Back to Work for this initiative to create real job opportunities for culturally diverse youth.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

\$7.2 million for Good Money - Empowering Individuals and Communities

Three community finance hubs will continue to operate in Collingwood, Dandenong and Geelong. The hubs offer safe and affordable microfinance services which support low income Victorians who are otherwise excluded from mainstream financial services. This initiative contributes to the Department of Health and Human Services' Community Participation output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV would like to see this microfinance initiative promoted to young culturally diverse people to encourage start-up businesses. We advocate for small business incentives for unemployed young people from culturally diverse communities in our discussion paper *Work Solutions: Improving Cultural Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace* (ECCV, 2014).

FAIR WORK & COMMUNITY JUSTICE

\$4.8 million for the Social and Community Services Equal Remuneration Order

Ongoing support will be provided for community service organisations to meet the wage increase from the Fair Work Australia Equal Remuneration Order in the Social and Community Services pay equity case. This will provide ongoing certainty for eligible organisations and ensure vital services are maintained. This initiative contributes to various Department of Health and Human Services' outputs.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV acknowledges the significant role the community services sector plays in supporting culturally diverse communities, refugees and migrants in Victoria. Fair Work Australia's decision will affect many workers paid under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010.

Of concern to ECCV is that specific attention needs to be given to the interpreting/translation sector as its role in diversity planning for both the government and non-government services is irreplaceable but in decline.

Feedback from our members, partners and community stakeholders, and from interpreters and translators working on ECCV projects, is that translators and interpreters are underpaid and under-supported in terms of work safety, career pathways, professional

development and training, and definition under the Award structure.

ECCV sees an opportunity to finally address the language services sector that may be hired outside of these guidelines and whose involvement in services help those services to meet ethnic-specific guidelines.

Interpreters and translators work as contractors and do not currently have specific protections and work benefits that their colleagues in the community sector get, and we would like to see a similar study of language sector workers' pay and condition rates to meet the demand for language services.

While we support a whole-of-government approach to multiculturalism, we are identifying problems from supply to demand in language service workers. Cultural competency training may help identify where these workers are most needed, but it cannot on its own recruit, train and supply a workforce if it does not exist. The Fair Work Australia Equal Remuneration Order sets a precedence for acknowledging the role of pay increases to the non-government sector. It is also an excellent model for reviewing the workplace conditions and wages for the language services sector.

\$2 million for Ethical Clothing

Ethical Clothing Australia will receive support towards its accreditation program. The program assists textile, clothing and footwear businesses to ensure their operations are transparent and ethical through compliance with the Homeworkers Code of Practice. This initiative delivers on the Government's election commitment as published in Labor's Financial Statement 2014. This initiative contributes to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources' Industry and Enterprise Innovation output.

ECCV COMMENT

ECCV commends this initiative and investment in Ethical Clothing to support Victoria's textile, clothing and footwear businesses to comply with the Homeworkers Code of Practice. Even though this sector is very 'hidden', homeworkers (also known as outworkers) are acknowledged to be made up of mostly migrant women from diverse communities often with little formal education, and limited English language skills who often do not understand their rights.

They experience poor working conditions and underpayment and, according to Ethical Clothing, very rarely receive industrial entitlements such as paid

annual leave, superannuation, or sick leave. ECCV would like to see this issue elevated and included as

part of broader systemic barriers faced by workers from culturally diverse communities in Victoria.

For more information contact contact Carl Gopalkrishnan, Senior Policy Officer on telephone 03 9349 4122 and by email at cgopalkrishnan@eccv.org.au

References

Access to Services for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Victorian Auditor-General's Report May 2014 2013–14:29 PP No 324, Session 2010–14. <http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/publications/20140529-Migrants-Services/20140529-Migrants-Services.pdf>

- Copies of recent ECCV Discussion papers are available online on our website: <http://eccv.org.au/policy/submissions/>
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