



**ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria**

Unready, Unwilling and Ageing Ethnic Baby Boomers and their Parents

Statewide Resources Centre
150 Palmerston Street, Carlton VIC 3053
T 9349 4122 F 9349 4967

ECCV Policy Discussion Paper 2009

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) Inc. was established in 1974 as a voluntary community based organisation. It is now a broadly based, statewide, peak advocacy body representing ethnic and multicultural communities in Victoria.

ECCV's role includes supporting, consulting, liaising with and providing information to Victoria's ethnic communities. ECCV delivers policy projects for key partners in areas like multicultural policy, aged care programs and skilled migration strategies.

ECCV's Aged Care Policy Committee is comprised of key stakeholders in the multicultural aged care sector. It is a strategic forum on Victorian aged care in the ethnic sector both as an information conduit and an advocacy group.

The Committee plays a strong role in maintaining quality aged care services in the ethnic sector and acts as a consultative body for State and Federal government reviews into aged care and related issues.

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FOREWORD

One of the more fascinating aspects of human sociology is how individuals and communities develop categories and assign labels for themselves, or are categorised and labelled by others. The so-called 'Baby Boomer' generation (born between 1946 and 1965) is a classic example. Often stereotyped by themselves and others as materialistic spendthrifts with a forever young mindset¹, they are also known as the 'Me Generation.' Yet a closer examination of Victoria's diverse population reveals the existence of a further demographic layer within this popular stereotype – a seldom acknowledged group of the immigrant community: the 'Ethnic Baby Boomers.'

As this Baby Boomer subgroup approaches the traditional age of retirement with the same reluctance to slow down and change their ways as their mainstream peers, little is known about how well they are preparing for the inevitable impacts of their overseas-born parents becoming elderly and frail. In October 2008, the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) Aged Care Committee hosted a public seminar on this timely issue. This discussion paper presents the initial findings of that consultation and highlights some of the key issues raised.

The title of the forum's discussion – *Adult Children and Ageing Parents: Coping or Hoping* – reflected many of the dilemmas noted on the day and in subsequent research. While the vast majority of these adult children genuinely want the best for their parents and a great deal of goodwill exists within these culturally diverse families, many Ethnic Baby Boomers remain alarmingly unprepared for the care-giving roles and responsibilities, let alone the cultural expectations of their parents.

This paper drills down to some of the hidden issues in the multicultural community and ECCV extends its warmest gratitude to all those who contributed to its development.

The appropriate aged-care for our rapidly expanding population of ethnic seniors is not an issue that can be left until tomorrow. It requires open discussion and development of solutions today. Otherwise our older overseas-born parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and so on are at risk of becoming permanently overlooked as the Ethnic Baby Boomers struggle to find a solution which meets everyone's needs and capabilities.

Ms Marion Lau OAM JP
Chairperson
ECCV Aged Care Committee

¹ Mulhall, Lisa 2008



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy paper has been developed in response to the increasing realisation among adult children of immigrant parents that enormous time, energy and sensitivity is required for them to ensure that their ageing loved ones maintain the best possible quality of life.² The demographic group (aged in their 40s, 50s and 60s and hereafter known as the Ethnic Baby Boomer generation) may have gone to school in Australia, learnt the English language and succeeded in their jobs but research indicates that many need to take stock of their ageing parent's culturally diverse needs.

The issues are many and not easily resolved. For example, conflicting cultural expectations and attitudes are a common obstacle among Ethnic Baby Boomers who do not actively identify with their parent's ethnic background due to reasons of personal preference or lifestyle practicality. As a result, unresolved feelings of guilt and blame can often arise in the process of Ethnic Baby Boomers adopting care giving roles for their parents.

It can take time for both parents and children to come together with one goal, source information about available support, explore viable aged care options and consider the consequences of such choices. Nevertheless, ECCV believes due consideration for the following recommendations will go some way to improving awareness among Victoria's Ethnic Baby Boomers of the impending needs and priorities of their ageing parents as well as promoting the development of more fruitful family-friendly options for aged care among migrant communities.

These recommendations include:

- Development of a broad public awareness campaign targeting all members of the Baby Boomer generation to highlight the key issues for consideration in terms of caring for the ageing parents;
- Resourcing of ethno-specific aged cared agencies to develop secondary ethno-specific material and resources that target the Ethnic Baby Boomers within their particular communities;
- Resourcing of migrant and multicultural community organisations to facilitate culturally appropriate family information sessions that encourage all family members to be involved in deciding the most desirable age care solution for their frail and elderly.

Moreover, the goal of this Discussion Paper is to help instigate some much-needed discussion around these important issues at both the micro and macro level; issues which population experts, service providers and policy makers alike all agree are destined to be integral to the way our society successfully and sustainably manages our collective future in the decades to come.

² *Ageing Parents and Children and Adult Children – Together*, 2000 produced by Federal Trade Commission



“Apart from climate change, ageing is the largest challenge facing Australia and the world in the next 50 years, according to University of Melbourne Professor of Psychiatry of Old Age, David Ames.”

— *The Age* supplement ‘Grey Matters Ageing in Australia,’ 20 October 2008

GENERATIONAL PROFILES AND THE ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

A snapshot of families in Australia³ indicates both cultural and linguistic diversity in the community as well as generational diversity in households. In 2006⁴, 26% of Australians had at least one parent born overseas and, of these, 44% had both parents born overseas. In addition there were almost 75,000 families where grandparents were living with both their children and grandchildren.

From a demographer’s standpoint, these statistics are what is known as *quantitative data*. Sociologists and policy makers, however, also like to consider a second form of analytical information, *qualitative data*, when shaping policy responses. One of the most common examples of this qualitative data are the surveys conducted by sample groups to get answers to questions not immediately discernible from raw numerical figures. One of the most common purposes is to help delineate between different social categories.

From a generational standpoint, community profiles tend to fall into groups according to year of birth and influential experiences during their formative childhood and teenage years⁵. Examples of commonly-used generational profiles are featured on the timeline on the next page. No doubt, some of the names will be familiar, and these various categories can be useful when compartmentalising one generational response to an issue from another. Or conversely, revealing when notable gaps exist.

For example, marketers make much of the so-called Baby Boomer generation and their propensity for consumption. There is little in-depth research, however, on Baby Boomers’ plans and expectations for their own aged care needs and even less concerning the responsibilities of Baby Boomers for the welfare of their ageing parents and older relatives⁶.

As the data gathered for this discussion paper demonstrates, Baby Boomers will be much more likely to face the support needs of their overseas-born parents before they prepare themselves for their own aged care lifestyle options. A major mind-shift is required among the public and service providers alike to ensure this more immediate concern is given the attention it deserves.

³Green, R ed. Families in Australia 2008 Australian Policy Online

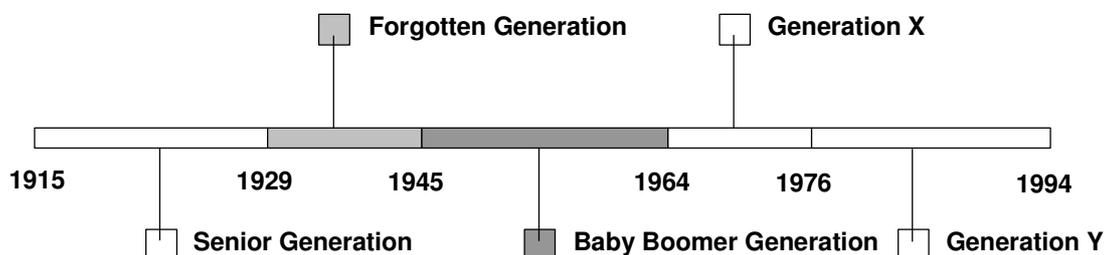
⁴ *ibid*

⁵ McCrindle, Mark. 2000

⁶ Quine, S. et al. 2006



Timeline of Generational Profiles *



* For the purposes of this report, some terms with a historically narrow focus have been expanded to accommodate the broader generation.

Forgotten Generation

Often identified as being born between 1929 and 1945, the so-called Forgotten Generation is marked by its childhood experience of the Great Depression and wartime rations. The name reflects their positioning between the more populous and prominent generations – the Seniors Generation and the Baby Boomers – although this generation is largely responsible for the massive post war European migration to Australia that is so often used as a broad descriptor in defining the above community profiles.

Demographic information indicates that 36% of people in Australia aged between 60 and 79 were born overseas⁷. This group forms an ethnic cohort with common characteristics, most notably a reputation for being frugal, resourceful, stoic and self-sufficient.

However, there is sub-group within this Forgotten Generation whose identity has long-been overlooked due to their origins in non-English speaking countries.

Forgotten Ethnic Generation

A subset of the Forgotten Generation, the Forgotten Ethnic Generation is overseas born, but more specifically born in non-English speaking countries. Among the oldest living immigrants, the group faces numerous barriers to social services due to a complexity of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) issues.

The older overseas-born generation represents the rapidly ageing immigrants most, of whom arrived in Australia during the post-war mass migration. According to Howe (2006) and Radermacher et al (2008) some 21% of Victoria's total aged population speaks a language other than English at home and 43% of that older culturally and linguistically diverse population is not proficient in English. They comprise 9% of Victoria's total aged population. In the Melbourne metropolitan area, 28% of the aged are of culturally diverse backgrounds.

⁷Peatling 2009



Baby Boomers

The term Baby Boomer was coined to describe a person born during the Post World War II era between 1946 and 1965, when soaring childbirth rates created an unusual population baby boom spike in many English-speaking countries.^{8 9}

In 2008 Baby Boomers held more than two-fifths of Australia's household wealth¹⁰. Consequently Boomers are frequently targeted in market research as cashed up consumers pre-occupied with youth, personal leisure and material acquisition.

According to a Queensland study, Baby Boomers spend a high proportion of their day on personal recreation and leisure activities such as visiting cinemas, libraries and outdoor venues. As such they have become known as the 'Me Generation'¹¹. Yet this generalisation does not preclude an awareness of and desire to become involved in, social issues. While a significant proportion of the Baby Boomer generation do live a busy, fast-track lifestyle focused primarily on fulfilling their personal interests, a percentage are becoming increasingly involved in volunteer work¹².

Ageing population projections show that Victoria's aged ethnic community will grow until 2011 but will then be overtaken by the ageing of the Australian-born baby boom bubble¹³.

Ethnic Baby Boomers

Ethnic Baby Boomers, a specific cohort within the Baby Boomer generation, refers to people who were born in Australia of non-English speaking immigrant parents, or arrived as young children and then grew up and went to school in Australia¹⁴. Like their non-English speaking parents, the Ethnic Baby Boomer group is rarely acknowledged as a specific group within population studies.

It is one of the primary intentions of this report to draw greater attention to this often overlooked segment of the population and highlight some of the unique issues faced, especially with regard to aged care. For example, many post war immigrant families benefited from the long economic boom in Australia when the Baby Boomers were growing up in the 1960s and 70s¹⁵. Yet a rising proportion of Baby Boomers are choosing to live in non-traditional family structures, i.e. as couples without children and in lone-person households.¹⁶ Consequently, many Ethnic Baby Boomers hold different attitudes to the traditional immigrant family values of their overseas-born parents.

⁸ Mulhall, Lisa 2008

⁹ ABS 2004

¹⁰ Mulhall, Lisa 2008

¹¹ Mulhall, Lisa 2008

¹² Baby Boomers in Queensland: A Profile of Persons Born 1946-1965, 2005

¹³ Howe 2006

¹⁴ Bouzo, Irene A. 2007

¹⁵ Bouzo, Irene A. 2007

¹⁶ Ibid.



CARING FOR THE ETHNIC AGED – COPING OR HOPING?

Demographic studies show that Baby Boomers affected historic changes to Australia during the second half of the 20th century in relation to housing, health, income, and – most pertinently to this report – aged care¹⁷. Yet paradoxically, dealing with aged related issues is a new phenomenon for many Ethnic Baby Boomers, even as their overseas-born parents become older and more frail before their eyes. The ever-youthful Baby Boomer mindset means that many avoid discussions on planning for their own retirement, so planning for the care of their ageing parents is widely considered an unknown frontier and a topic best avoided.

As part of ECCV's 2008 seminar on *The Ageing Mind*, the Council conducted a public forum to canvass the key issues concerning the changing responsibilities of adult children and their ageing ethnic parents. Discussion centred on intergenerational and cultural conflict as well as the limited knowledge among Ethnic Baby Boomers' about the ageing process and options in aged care. Emotional issues such as feelings of guilt by the adult children and disempowerment of their ethnic parents were also raised. It became clear that the ageing of overseas-born people was fraught with additional complexities when combined with culturally diverse needs.

A number of key observations were made regarding the priorities and expectations of the respective generations and the issues that arise as a result.

Ethnic Baby Boomers	Forgotten Ethnic Generation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many Ethnic Baby Boomers are navigating the new frontier of the aged care system for the first time – not for their own ageing needs but rather for those of their frail and elderly overseas-born parents• Many Ethnic Baby Boomers are unprepared for the changing roles and new responsibilities concerning ageing parents.• Ethnic Baby Boomers need to acknowledge that their immigrant parents prefer, and benefit from, receiving information about aged care services in their first languages.• Some Baby Boomer adult children feel guilty about fast-tracking their own interests and having insufficient time for their parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many elderly immigrant parents, who have lived in Australia for up to 50 years, are feeling lost in space, time and history.• They fear changes in their health, helplessness and are slipping back into the past in terms of language spoken and cultural association.• A significant number of overseas-born ageing parents and grandparents are feeling disempowered as their cultural expectations of the ageing process are contradicted or seemingly disregarded, by younger generations in their own families.• Immigrant grandparents are becoming alienated from the younger Generations X and Y within their own families.

¹⁷ Baby Boomers in Queensland: A Profile of Persons Born 1946-1965, 2005



Overall, the challenges in the current and future planning of Victoria's ethnic aged fall into two overarching spheres:

- issues *within* the family unit; and
- issues *beyond* the family unit.

According to responses during the ECCV forum ...

Issues *within* the culturally diverse families relate to low levels of awareness about, and acceptance of, ageing issues and options among the Ethnic Baby Boomer generation. In addition, markedly divergent attitudes toward the management of aged care issues are evident between different generations.

Beyond the family unit, issues identified relate to the need for greater investment in aged care education and support services that specifically target Ethnic Baby Boomers, as well as the need for further investment in interpreter services for seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Professionals give people permission to love and support their parents by not necessarily living with them. In other countries where children are expected to fully care for their parents, giving this permission would be akin to treason.

— Social Worker



“It is acceptable to assert your viewpoint as the person to whom the parent has appealed to for support and not give in to guilt that you may feel about being unable to do for them as they did for you as children.”

— Ethnic Baby Boomer

Awareness within the Ethnic Family Unit

Whatever their ethnic background, the decline of parent’s health and intellectual capacities requires adult children to become personally involved in culturally appropriate health and aged care services, even if they know very little about them.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a significant proportion of adult children, especially those in the Ethnic Baby Boomer culture, are noticeably unversed with the process of dealing with ageing, dying and eventual death, with some never having to face the trauma of these events first-hand.

As a result, it is not uncommon for those new to the experience to feel confused and overwhelmed that everything they need to know is suddenly hitting them all at once. If Ethnic Baby Boomers wish to support their parents effectively, they need to gain a better knowledge of ageing and aged care and understanding of culturally appropriate services as early as possible, and certainly before exploring options.

For adult children of migrant parents, a few essential considerations to keep in mind include:

- Their complete family medical history. Knowledge of milestones such as marriage, births, illnesses, time in transit, and entry and exit dates to various countries is often lost in the course of migration, along with key spiritual beliefs such as whether older generations want to know negative health diagnoses;
- The language preferences of their elderly immigrant parents, including the specific dialects, even if they have lived in Australia for several decades. Often difficult emotional and life changing issues are better explained in a client’s first language;
- The tendency for parents to be less than honest with their children, play down, or entirely avoid talking about symptoms and serious health concerns;
- The often unacknowledged loss of space, time and history experienced by ageing immigrants;
- The need to understand the different types of diseases under the umbrella term of dementia;
- The need for greater awareness that dementia is not a natural part of the ageing process and requires early intervention;
- The need for more physical, emotional and financial help from younger family members as their immigrant parents’ health declines when they reach a frail age.



Attitudes within the Ethnic Family Unit – Tradition versus Transition

Dealing with aged related changes in elderly parents is rarely without challenges. When certain attitudes are rooted in culturally diverse traditions and expectations differ between generations, these challenges can be exacerbated. It has been well documented that the cultural beliefs of immigrant parents' often differ considerably from those of their adult children born or raised in Australia. The reasons for this are many and varied, but two stand out overall.

Firstly, these differences can be seen as reflective of the influence of each individual's surroundings and the prevailing mood of their time. For instance, whereas attitudes of the Forgotten Generation are commonly influenced by *tradition* – that which has gone before – the mindset of their Baby Boomer offspring is more often attuned to the rapid pace of *transition* that has shaped and continues to shape their lives – the here and now and the next big thing. It is not surprising then, that an inevitable tension arises between the desire to remain loyal to cultural influences rooted in another time and place, and a willingness to adapt and incorporate cultural elements into one's life according to changing needs, opportunities and expectations.

A second key determinant relates to an individual's prior first-hand experience of another's journey through ageing, dying and death, or lack thereof as the case may be. For example, most families prepare for the rigors of the ageing process (if only on a subconscious level) simply by maintaining regular access to grandparents. For a certain percentage of the Ethnic Baby Boomer generation, however, this opportunity for close ongoing contact with their grandparents is not always possible. That familial link was denied or disrupted due to the impacts of migration, wartime or events like the Holocaust. As a result, this group of Ethnic Baby Boomers – through no fault of its own – has had little personal experience of watching members of their family age, which can impact greatly on their attitudes and coping mechanisms regarding ageing and aged care. Worse still, this can create tensions within the family dynamic and impact the manner in which issues of future care are contemplated and resolved.

Perspectives from the Forgotten Ethnic Generation

Tradition figures strongly in the attitudes of the Forgotten Ethnic Generation when it comes to matters of ageing and aged care. Comfort and confidence come from maintaining established and stable structures, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities. For example, it is typical in many migrant cultures for the care and support of older multicultural parents to fall upon the adult child, often the daughter. This can create obvious tension when the daughter herself would feel more comfortable calling an aged care professional for services. For some older post-war immigrants, this deviation from expected norms feeds a perception of ingratitude on the part of the daughter for the sacrifices her parents have made, working hard in their early settlement years to give their children a better quality of life.

Traditionally, older members of culturally diverse families also maintained regular contact with their grandchildren and members of the extended family, with the frequency of such interaction increasing as levels of dependency increased. Sadly, the greater likelihood of blended and fractured family units among the Baby Boomer generation means this expectation of regular intergeneration contact and care is often hampered or unavailable altogether. Even among the more active cohort of grandparents, feelings of disappointment or resentment can develop because their Generation X and Y grandchildren do not visit as often as they would like.



Perspectives from the Ethnic Baby Boomers

For all the claims that members of the Baby Boomer generation shun traditional family responsibilities, many prove themselves to be quite the opposite by assuming primary responsibility for two other generations at once¹⁸ – their parents and their own children. Demographic studies suggest the convergences of social trends that lead to this situation are not unusual.

Firstly, Baby Boomers are increasingly likely to have children later in life than their parents, including some from second marriages. Secondly, the children of Baby Boomers are increasingly likely to stay at home for longer. Thirdly, the retirement intentions of Baby Boomers¹⁹ tend to show that many desire to retire gradually and spend longer in the labour force. Subsequently, they spend more time in a transition phase of part-time work. Finally, members of the Forgotten Generation are living longer and therefore requiring greater care and support from their Baby Boomer children. Many Baby Boomer women find themselves juggling labour force and family duties²⁰ as a result, especially those born overseas with primary care giving responsibilities for other members of the family.

Aside from the stress of feeling sandwiched by competing demands, there is the additional distress of observing a loved one's deteriorating health which can be physically and emotionally exhausting to those well-accustomed to the ageing process; let alone those encountering it for the first time. For some, being forced to witness dramatic changes in older relatives that neither party fully comprehend or understand, can not only spark feelings of intense frustration but brooding alienation. For others, the emotional strain and physical demands of caring for ageing parents is further compounded by feelings of guilt that they have moved with the times while their parents, who nurtured them, were unable to move with them.

Some Ethnic Baby Boomers pursue the option of long-distance elder care²¹, but this often creates other issues due to the common preference among migrants for ready-reliance on family and ethnic community support. Specific issues that can be exacerbated by distance include:

- loss of traditional extended family supports;
- increased risk of depression due to isolation and dependence on family members;
- limited grasp of functional English;
- culturally stigmas and ethno-biases toward mental health disorders; and
- high incidences of advanced dementia in ethnic groups²².

It is important to note that in general, adult children want to do the very best for their ageing parents. However, competing demands of work and young families act as further barriers to many Ethnic Baby Boomers being able to fulfil family and parental expectations.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Warren 2008

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ageing Parents and Children and Adult Children – Together, 2000 produced by Federal Trade Commission

²² Kingsbury, R & Thode, K 2008



Opening Communication within the Family Unit

Even when Ethnic Baby Boomers possess the necessary knowledge about the ageing process, discussion about options can be a highly sensitive subject, especially if there has been conflict in the past. Establishing a worthwhile two-way conversation about the failing health of older parents needs a great deal of time and sensitivity to accommodate paces and approaches that are often incompatible across generations.

For example, elderly members of the Forgotten Ethnic Generation are not only slowing down in accordance with their time of life, but they also have a tendency to remain silent about their changing needs. In contrast, the Baby Boomer generation is known for its vocal, fast-track lifestyle.

While the temptation for some Ethnic Baby Boomers might be to take the “quick and easy” approach and simply make decisions for their ageing parents²³ without the latter’s consultation or consent, this route can create problems in the longer term as the Forgotten Ethnic Generation forget their command of English and revert to their first language, seeking the comfort and safety of familiar cultural backgrounds.

In summary, specific communication strategies may need to be devised and implemented to facilitate open dialogue between adult children and their parents in multicultural families about what is often a sensitive topic.

Immediate Impressions About the Cross-Cultural Cross-Generational Divide

(source: The Ageing Mind forum)

- Whole families require culturally and linguistically appropriate advice, assistance and information.
- The ownership of change needs to be shared by all the different generations.
- It takes time for both parents and children to get culturally and linguistically appropriate information, explore aged care options and consider the consequences of choices.
- Intergenerational changes and differing cultural attitudes are a key source of family conflict and barriers to accessing aged care options.
- Intergenerational co-operation and more open communication in families can lead to shared decision making in relation to aged care options.
- Adult children and their overseas-born parents need to sit down and talk. Examples of tactics which may be employed are included in **Appendix 1**.

²³ Fowler 1999



Beyond the family unit

Divergent views of ageing not only affect how frailty and illness is perceived by adult children in relation to their parents and in contrast to their parents, but also the manner in which alternative aged care options are utilised and engage with ailing members of the Forgotten Ethnic Generation²⁴. Unfortunately, entrenched cultural attitudes exist on all sides creating unnecessary barriers to adequate aged care support and leading to the all-too-common scenario of clients waiting until serious problems occur before seeking appropriate aged care advice and assistance.

On the one hand are the families with many adult Baby Boomers unaware of aged care services outside the home and family, and / or their parents unwilling to access them. On the other hand is the aged care industry which is looking at how it will cope with the impending Baby Boomers bubble²⁵ over the coming decades; some without giving due consideration to the more immediate issue of Baby Boomers having to look after their ageing parents. This failure by all parties to engage effectively means many families and carers of elderly CALD relatives are struggling with an existing aged care system they say is too complex and bureaucratic²⁶.

“When you get older and a little more frail, families often don't understand the aged care system, so a case manager plays a role in connecting them with a range of services and explaining the types of support and assistance that's available to them.”

— Gerard Mansour, CEO, Aged and Community Care Victoria
7.30 Report ABC, 01.10.2008

Government Policies and Priorities

Australian government and community research on the impact of the Baby Boomer generation tends to focus on topics such as work, retirement and lifestyle financial planning.²⁷ In terms of aged care, strategic planning in Australian society tends to give a “helicopter view” of aged care, predicting a greater strain on hospitals, aged care services, pensions and the need for superannuation²⁸ when the exploding population of Boomers becomes the ‘Grey Boomers’. Crucially, little acknowledgement is made of the lifestyle stage when they become the ‘Care-Giver Boomers’

One of the key priority areas identified involves the development of simple, user-friendly aged care information in multiple languages and provision of free interpreter services in aged care services.

²⁴ Cole et al 2003

²⁵ Fallon 2004

²⁶ *Aged Care in Crisis* on the 7.30 1 Oct 2008 transcript

²⁷ Quine, S et al. 2006

²⁸ McIntosh, Greg 1998-99



A second area of need involves appropriate assessment of older immigrants suffering cognitive impairments such as memory loss and dementia. It is not uncommon for the older person's sense of shame about accessing residential care and their children's limited availability to provide care to exacerbate conflict within the families of overseas-born elderly parents and their Australian-raised adult children around these difficult issues.

Ethnic community-based welfare and service organisations

Ethnic community-based welfare and services organisations are well positioned to address some of the key issues identified previously. Many of these organisations are already assisting adult children of elderly ethnic parents to cope with the ethno-biased views of dementia held by some overseas-born seniors, eg "no such problem exists in our culture." The strong networks these agencies have established within the ethnic communities and the high levels of trust with families mean they are well placed to:

- Target whole families in the immigrant community with 'ageing process' awareness campaigns;
- Provide immigrant families with access to more specific, culturally appropriate information;
- Facilitate the joint decision-making process between adult children and their overseas-born frail and elderly parents.

Suggestions for action by community-based ethnic welfare and service organisations include:

- Encouragement of next of kin to understand the need to communicate in their parents' native language.
- Facilitation of open communication sessions between Ethnic Baby Boomers and their elderly immigrant parents.
- Education of Ethnic Baby Boomers that their parents require aged care information in their first language.
- Provision of more ethno-specific support and care organisations in those areas where there is a demand.
- Minimisation of waiting lists to access relevant organisations.
- Encouragement of children and grandchildren to establish emotional and cultural links with elderly members of their family.
- Provision of opportunities for adult children to express *their* needs.
- Assistance for Ethnic Baby Boomers to plan for the future and understand their parents' likes and dislikes before care is required.
- Provision of information on culturally appropriate aged care options and services.
- Development of targeted information sessions for Ethnic Baby Boomers on the ageing process in a CALD context.



“I would like to see an (aged care) system that is based on people and their needs. And I would certainly encourage families to work very, very closely with approved care providers to ensure they are getting the service tailored specifically for their needs.”

— Justine Elliot, Minister for the Ageing 7.30 Report, 01/10/2008

CONCLUSION

Demographic predictions show that the Baby Boomer bubble, born from mid-1940s to mid-1960s, will make a significant impact on aged care services in Victoria as the generation ages and retires. Before that happens, they – and the Ethnic Baby Boomers sub-set especially – is faced with having to confront and manage the culturally and linguistically diverse expectations of their aging parents.

Many Ethnic Baby Boomers are unprepared for the roles and responsibilities of providing support of their frail and elderly, overseas-born parents. A lack of understanding of the ageing process combined with insufficient knowledge of aged care services (culturally and linguistically appropriate services especially) creates an enormous challenge for the Ethnic Baby Boomers themselves, their immediate families, communities and the broader community.

ECCV's literature review and consultation suggests that feelings of frustration, guilt and reluctant acceptance are common in cross-cultural, cross-generational discussions in relation to aged care issues. Increased opportunities for open communication between the generations would foster more fruitful decision-making and assist adult children and their parents in multicultural families to address aged care options and positive ageing with dignity and respect.

Resources and support services need to be appropriately tailored to meet their needs of Victoria's CALD families and households with ageing relatives. ECCV, ethnic community-based welfare and service organisations, and other related aged care services have a significant role to play in this respect through the promotion and awareness of lifestyle transitions and ageing concepts, the facilitation of closer relationships within immigrant families, and the more efficient targeting of Ethnic Baby Boomers and their frail and elderly parents with information about aged care options for elderly parents.

Overall, the key message is to start this discussion as soon as possible within families, within communities and across all levels of society, and to allow extra effort when considering why differing attitudes toward aged care exist as they do, even if a degree of pragmatism should ultimately decide the best way forward.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- That broad public awareness campaigns on caring for ageing parents be targeting at culturally and linguistically diverse family groups, in particular members of the Ethnic Baby Boomer generation.
- That increased resources be provided to ethno-specific aged care agencies to develop secondary ethno-specific material and resources that target the Ethnic Baby Boomers within their particular communities.
- That immigrant and multicultural community organisations be resourced to facilitate culturally appropriate family information sessions that encourage various generations of family members to be involved in decision-making on the most desirable age care solutions for their frail and elderly.
- That free interpreter services be available for seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds to access aged care service provision and information.
- That on-going research is undertaken on the roles and responsibilities of Ethnic Baby Boomers and the care of their culturally diverse elderly parents.



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Information on the complexities of dealing with the ageing process in the context of cultural diversity draw on demographic information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS); studies in Queensland and New South Wales; Australian and western world community profiles; marketing profiles; policy options, trends and local media commentaries.



APPENDIX 1

Consultation Methodology

ECCV consulted a broad range of ethnic community-based welfare and service agencies, multicultural organisations and peak bodies with an interest in culturally and linguistically appropriate aged care service provision. The initial consultation took place via *The Ageing Mind Open Forum* on 16 October 2008. The forum resulted directly from decisions made by the ECCV Aged Care Policy Committee in response to pertinent emerging issues of dementia and family-based care of the aged. Input was garnered around four key questions:

1. What is the most important information, adult children should know about their ageing immigrant parents?
2. If they would sit down and talk, what sort of things would adult children talk about with their frail and ageing migrant parents?
3. Why is planning with multicultural background ageing parents a daunting challenge for their adult children?
4. What else can organisations do to create conditions that will enable adult children of elderly ethnic parents cope better?

Organisations Consulted

- Aberdeen Aged Care Facility
- Alheimers Victoria
- Australian Croatian Community Services
- Australian Greek Welfare Services
- Australian Vietnamese Welfare Association
- Cancer Council Vic
- CELAS Spanish Latin American Welfare Centre
- Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing
- Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service Victoria
- Jewish Care
- Department of Health and Ageing
- Environment Victoria
- Migrant Resource Centre Northern Region
- Migrant Resource Centre North West Inc
- Migrant Resource Centre South Eastern Region
- North Yarra Community Health
- Regional Information and Advocacy Council
- Royal District Nursing Service
- State Trustees
- Tabulam and Templer Homes for the Aged
- Victorian Arabic Social Services
- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- Wesley Care
- Western Region Health Centre



APPENDIX 2

Tips for Adult Children to Talk to Parents

(Source: Workshop responses at ECCV consultation, *The Ageing Mind* Forum, 16 October 2008)

What to say for rebuilding close relationships:-

Ask about daily family members routines

- How are you going?
- What did you do today?
- How is the garden?
- What is the weather like there?
- How did you go with the footy tipping?
- What did you do yesterday?
- How are you going?
- How are your flowers?
- How is the weather?

Discuss cultural preferences

- Talk about happy memories
- Talk about cultural values and ethics regarding continuance in caring for frail parents.

Identify real health concerns rather than the avoidance of talking about impalpable and difficult issues

- How is Dad going?
- How's your walking?
- How is the family?
- How is your limp?
- Are you in pain?
- Have a reassuring chat that older people will be cared for.

Contact: Dr Irene A. Bouzo Tel: 03 9349 4122 email: ibouzo@eccv.org.au

www.eccv.org.au