



**ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria**

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Submission
to the
Commonwealth Department of Social Services
on
Key Directions for the
Commonwealth Home Support Programme Discussion Paper
June 2014

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Question 1: Are there any other key directions that you consider should be pursued in the development of the Commonwealth Home Support Programme from July 2015?

As Australia's seniors' population is becoming increasingly multicultural, responding to cultural diversity needs to be a key component of service provision through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP)

ECCV highlights the importance of the *Access and Equity* framework of the Australian Government as an important policy underpinning services delivered by the Commonwealth.

The number of seniors from a non-English speaking background is rapidly growing in Australia, particularly in Victoria, and service provision and funding allocations need to respond to this diversity:

- About a third (31 per cent) of Victorians aged 65 and over are from a non-English speaking background which is equivalent to 220,000 people.
- 33 per cent of the Victorian population aged 75 to 84 are from a non-English speaking background.
- There is a growing number of older people from new and emerging communities that have arrived in Australia more recently. Almost 100,000 people aged 55 and over are from new and emerging communities in Victoria and they have limited access to culturally appropriate ageing and aged care services.
- By 2021, more than 30 per cent of Australia's older population will be from a non-English speaking background.

ECCV documented community feedback shows that seniors from a non-English speaking background have often a strong preference for ethno-specific and multicultural services given they provide services that respond to their cultural, linguistic and spiritual preferences and needs.

ECCV believes that a healthy ageing multicultural community would lead to greater community harmony and reduce the burdens on the Australian aged care system.

Recommendation 1

That the Australian Government strongly focuses on culturally responsive and appropriate service provision in CHSP.

Recommendation 2

That the Australian Government includes 'Access and Equity' as a key direction of the CHSP to ensure that services delivered through the CHSP are culturally responsive.

Question 2: How should restorative care be implemented in the new programme?

The ECCV commends the Active Service Model (ASM) in Victoria as it enhances the capacity of people to live independently and people's needs are viewed in a holistic manner.

ECCV further highlights the importance of ethno-specific and multicultural Planned Activity Groups (PAGs) in Victoria in increasing the wellbeing and reablement of seniors from a non-English speaking background. Ethno-specific PAGs provide frail, older people from non-English speaking backgrounds with:

- Same-language/same culture social contact
- Bilingual health and aged care information
- Referrals to a wider range of aged care services.

The ECCV highlights that it is important to specify how to ensure *wellness* and *reablement* of seniors from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. ECCV suggests engaging with the multicultural aged care sector on how the wellness and reablement approach can be best implemented for seniors from a non-English speaking background.

Recommendation 3

That the Australian Government integrates the Active Service Model in the design of the CHSP.

Recommendation 4

That the Australian Government resources Planned Activity Groups, including ethno-specific and multicultural PAGs, to ensure community participation of seniors from a non-English speaking background who are otherwise at risk of social isolation.

Recommendation 5

That the Australian Government engages with the multicultural aged care sector in implementing the restorative care model in a way that is culturally responsive.

Question 3: Are these proposed client eligibility criteria appropriate? Should the eligibility criteria specify the level of functional limitation?

The ECCV highlights that in many cases people with a refugee experience need access to aged care services before the age of 65. People with a refugee experience tend to age earlier as trauma and torture related experiences are seen as influencing the ageing process. Also, life expectancy is considered comparatively lower among these groups.

The ECCV also notes that for specific services a level of functional limitation should not be specified, because there are situations where people from a non-English speaking background require the services envisaged under the CHSP but where they do not have any functional limitations. Their requirements may concern language, specific dietary needs, service delivery on specific days due to religious stipulations, and support with access to services.

Recommendation 6

That the Australian Government does not specify functional limitations in the person's eligibility for services under CHSP.

Recommendation 7

That the Australian Government introduces flexible models and mechanisms ensuring that seniors with a refugee experience can access ageing and aged care service before the age of 65.

Question 4: Are the circumstances for direct referral from screening to service provision appropriate?

The ECCV believes that clients from a non-English speaking background need a face to face assessment to ensure that they receive appropriate services. ECCV suggests that clients from a non-English speaking background will not be directly referred from screening to services as they are likely to encounter language and cultural barriers during the screening process.

Recommendation 8

That the Australian Government ensures that seniors from a non-English speaking background have access to culturally relevant and effective face to face assessment. ECCV highlights that a direct referral from screening to services places seniors from a non-English speaking background at a disadvantage.

Question 5: Are there particular service types that it would be appropriate to access without face to face assessment?

The ECCV does not have a particular view on this.

Question 6: Are there any other specific triggers that would mean an older person would require a face to face assessment?

The ECCV highlights that people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background require a face to face assessment due to access barriers, particularly language proficiency issues.

Recommendation 9

That the Australian Government makes provisions that ensure that people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background have a right to access face to face assessments.

Question 7: Are there better ways to group outcomes?

ECCV believes that service delivery linked to outcome areas needs to include 'Access and Equity to Services'. ECCV suggests incorporating mechanisms that ensure access and equity to mainstream services and the delivery of culturally appropriate services.

Recommendation 10

That the Australian Government includes 'Access and Equity to Services' as an additional outcome area under service delivery to ensure equitable access of services of all Australians, including those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

Question 8: Are there specific transition issues to consider?

ECCV highlights that many services in the Victorian Home and Community Care (HACC) program are vital for seniors from a non-English speaking background. For example, the current HACC Language Services Credit Line is important to facilitate access of seniors from a non-English speaking background to aged care services. Members of the ethnic and multicultural community aged care sector in Victoria have expressed concerns that agencies that work with clients from a non-English speaking background will not be able to access the HACC Language Services Credit Line after July 2015. Multicultural aged care agencies are concerned that a lack of targeted HACC funding for interpreting and translating services will place seniors from a non-English speaking background at a serious disadvantage and lessen their opportunities to maintain their independence and links to the community. For that reasons ECCV asks the Commonwealth to introduce a language subsidy for services provided under the CHSP.

Further, ECCV community consultations have shown that seniors from a non-English speaking background encounter social isolation and have varying levels of English. Bilingual and bicultural *Access and Support* workers assist seniors from a non-English speaking background navigating the HACC system and link them to HACC services. Members of the ethnic and multicultural community aged care sector have emphasised how vital the face to face element of the Access and Support roles are; as relevant details of clients from a non-English speaking background are missed over the phone. Also seniors from a non-English speaking background find it difficult to stay on the phone for extended periods especially as they need an interpreter for the phone assessment. The Access and Support program enables people to live independently in the community and improves uptake of service of people who encounter access barriers due to issues such as culture and language. The ECCV recommends that the Access and Support program will be continued in Victoria.

The ECCV believes that diversity planning in the current Victorian HACC program is vital in order to sensitise mainstream providers to respond to diversity. ECCV suggests including diversity planning mechanisms in the CHSP.

ECCV community feedback indicates that social isolation is a common issue among seniors from a non-English speaking background. Ethno-specific and multicultural *Friendly Visiting Programs* in Victoria provide vital same language social support for seniors from a non-English speaking background and therefore it is important that multicultural agencies are resourced in delivering these volunteer programs beyond June 2015.

ECCV also highlights the importance of ongoing, formalised consultation with the aged care sector in Victoria. It is vital the Department consults on a regular basis to ensure an ongoing dialogue between the Government, peak bodies and service providers. The ECCV and multicultural aged care service providers would like to create and strengthen relationships with the Department of Social Services. ECCV suggests the establishment of a State-based Commonwealth Home Support Programme Advisory Committee for Victoria that brings together aged care peak bodies and stakeholders. Such a Committee will be vital for the Victorian aged care sector in getting updated on and adapting to the transition. This will ensure a collaborative approach between the Victorian aged care sector and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.

ECCV further emphasises that agencies, such as in the multicultural sector, will be seriously financially disadvantaged if a group insurance cover is not provided by the Commonwealth. Under the current State arrangements in Victoria insurance is provided for all HACC funded agencies. ECCV advocates for an introduction of group insurance cover for CHSP services providers in Victoria.

Recommendation 11

That the Commonwealth Government introduces a subsidy in Home and Community Care for interpreting and translating services in Victoria equivalent to the Victorian HACC Language Services Credit Line.

Recommendation 12

That the Commonwealth Government ensures the continuation and strengthening of the Access and Support program directed at clients from a non-English speaking background.

Recommendation 13

That the Australian Government incorporates diversity planning practices into the CHSP.

Recommendation 14

That the Australian Government continues resourcing ethno-specific and multicultural organisations in running volunteer programs that visit isolated seniors at home.

Recommendation 15

That the Commonwealth Government establishes a State based Commonwealth Advisory Committee on *Home Support* services to ensure strong collaborative approaches with peak bodies and service providers in delivering services to the Victorian community.

Recommendation 16

That the Commonwealth provides group insurance cover for agencies, particularly for smaller specialist providers, through the CHSP.

Question 9: How are supports for carers (other than respite services) best offered? For example, should these be separate to or part of the Commonwealth Home Support Programme?

The ECCV does not have a particular view on this question.

Question 10: What capacity building resources are needed to assist with the sector's transition to the Commonwealth Home Support Programme?

ECCV acknowledges that the *My Aged Care* website has a number of translations in community languages and applauds the Commonwealth on this initiative.

ECCV also highlights that its online multicultural aged care directory (for launch in 2014) is an important resource in ensuring access of seniors from a non-English speaking background to ageing and aged care services in Victoria. Often seniors from a non-English speaking background have a preference for ethno-specific and culturally appropriate aged care services which are listed in the ECCV directory.

There is a high risk that multicultural seniors will not access services directly through the My Aged Care call centre or website as for them ethno-specific agencies are often the first point of call. ECCV suggests the development of resources that facilitate access of seniors from a non-English speaking background to services, particularly those who due to issues of language, literacy, and trust will not access services via My Aged Care. Such resources need to be customised to a variety of multicultural communities and their preferences. ECCV highlights the cultural competence and existing community partnerships that ethno-specific and multicultural service providers have.

Further, the ECCV believes that resources need to be developed that assist ethno-specific and multicultural aged care providers in adapting to the changes in the Victorian HACC program and getting prepared for the implementation of the CHSP in Victoria. Such resources will facilitate an easier transition for agencies with a view to sustaining smaller providers in Victoria, particularly ethno-specific and multicultural aged care agencies.

Recommendation 17

That the Australian Government provides support to the ethno-specific and multicultural aged care sector in Victoria in the development of resources that assist multicultural communities to easily access information on ageing and aged care services.

Recommendation 18

That the Australian Government supports ethno-specific and multicultural agencies in building their capacity to deliver specialist services under the new arrangements of the CHSP in Victoria.

Question 11: How should the current Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged Program be positioned into the future?

The ECCV does not have a particular view on this question.

Question 12: Are there any other issues that need to be considered in transitioning functions from the current HACC Service Group Two to My Aged Care?

ECCV suggests that the Commonwealth Government resources care coordination and case management directed at people from a non-English speaking background. ECCV highlights that it is vital that care coordination is undertaken in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner.

Consumers from a non-English speaking background will miss out on appropriate support if client coordination is not funded under the CHSP. Small ethno-specific and multicultural services in those local communities are already stretched to capacity and are unable to provide further assistance. Most multicultural and ethno-specific services have a small workforce with part time employees or volunteers and will not have the resources for care coordination without any financial support.

The ECCV highlights that case management and client care coordination is a vital component of services provision to seniors from a non-English speaking background. For that reason, the ECCV advocates that case management and client care coordination should continue to be funded under the CHSP.

Recommendation 19

That the Australian Government includes care coordination for people from a non-English speaking background as part of its key responsibilities under the CHSP in assessing client needs. The ECCV suggests resourcing care coordination and case management activities for people from a non-English speaking background in order link them effectively to services and ensure equitable uptake.

Question 13: Is there anything else you want to raise to help with the development of the Commonwealth Home Support Programme?

ECCV suggests focusing strongly on policy programs and policy advocacy initiatives that facilitate access to services. ECCV believes that such program should be a significant and key focus of the CHSP rather than adding it on through a competitive grants program.

ECCV also highlights the importance of clearly linking the Commonwealth's *National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds* to the CHSP and the programme's design. ECCV believes that sectoral development positions on a Federal and State/Territory level should be funded in order to ensure the *Strategy* and its associated goals will be implemented. Seniors from a non-English speaking background constitute about a third of Victoria's population aged 65 and specialist input from the multicultural aged care sector and organisations representing multicultural communities will be vital to ensure equitable access of services for seniors from a non-English speaking background.

ECCV suggests that the Commonwealth Government makes provisions that support specialist providers as these have invaluable expertise. ECCV is concerned about equitable access to funding in the design of the CHSP. ECCV asks the Commonwealth that it allocates block funding rather than funding agencies through a contestable process as smaller organisations, particularly ethno-specific and multicultural aged care agencies, find it extremely challenging to compete with 'big players' in the aged care market. Ethno-specific agencies have invaluable expertise in delivering services to seniors from a non-English speaking background and it is vital that this expertise will be utilised in the CHSP.

ECCV highlights the importance of linking the My Aged Care services to the Victorian Access and Support program to ensure equitable access of seniors from a non-English speaking background to CHSP services. The ECCV also suggests resourcing a 'mediated access' to My Aged Care via ethno-specific and multicultural service providers as these agencies are often the first point of call for seniors from a non-English speaking background.

Populations from new and emerging communities are increasingly moving into older age groups. These communities are new in the sense that they have mostly settled in Australia comparatively recently. They are emerging in that they are yet to experience the peak in their aged populations and increasingly will need access to aged care services. Also, smaller ethnic communities have the right to express and preserve their cultural identity. It is vital that new and emerging communities and smaller ethnic communities are included in the Department of Social Services' planning process to meet the needs of a wide range of communities.

A growing number of seniors from a non-English speaking background in regional, rural and remote areas of Victoria need access to ageing and aged care services. ECCV suggests that the

Commonwealth Government facilitates culturally appropriate access of multicultural communities in regional, rural, and remoter areas to ageing and aged care services.

ECCV believes that the CHSP needs to focus on workforce development issues in the multicultural aged care sector. The recruitment and retention of bilingual staff is essential to maintain a culturally responsive aged care workforce. Overseas qualified nurses and care staff from predominantly non-English speaking countries bring valuable diversity skills to the aged care industry. Cultural awareness training for local staff and newcomers would improve their workforce transition into the Australian system. There is also a growing untapped market of multicultural Victorians who are attracted to targeted aged care training programs delivered through certified Registered Training Organisations in ethnic and multicultural agencies. Therefore, ECCV suggests facilitating aged care training opportunities for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

ECCV highlights the importance of tailoring the National Aged Care Advocacy Program to the preferences and needs of seniors from a non-English speaking background, their families and carers to ensure their effective uptake of advocacy programs. ECCV suggests that the National Aged Care Advocacy Program incorporates advocacy for seniors from a non-English speaking background as a key priority. ECCV also recommends that the *Program* works in close partnership with the multicultural aged care sector in each State and Territory given the cultural competence of ethno-specific and multicultural agencies in this area.

ECCV highlights the importance of embedding cultural competency training in the CHSP to ensure that staff have an understanding of the needs of older people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and how to provide culturally appropriate care.

Recommendation 20

That the Australian Government includes policy programs and policy advocacy initiatives as a key focus area in the CHSP.

Recommendation 21

That the Australian Government clearly links the Commonwealth's National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds to the CHSP and the implementation of the programme.

Recommendation 22

That the Australian Government applies block funding models to smaller organisations, particularly specialist providers such as ethno-specific and multicultural aged care agencies.

Recommendation 23

That the Australian Government links My Aged Care services to the Victorian Access and Support program to ensure equitable access of seniors from a non-English speaking background to Commonwealth Home Support services provided via My Aged Care.

Recommendation 24

That the Australian Government provides assistance to ethno-specific and multicultural aged care agencies in facilitating referrals to My Aged Care.

Recommendation 25

That the Australian Government includes a wide range of multicultural communities in the CHSP planning process, including those from new and emerging and smaller ethnic communities.

Recommendation 26

That the Australian Government facilitates culturally appropriate access for seniors from a non-English speaking background to ageing and aged care services in regional and rural areas of Victoria.

Recommendation 27

That the Australian Government provides incentives for the recruitment, training and retention of bilingual aged care staff through the CHSP.

Recommendation 28

That the Australian Government makes provisions that ensure that the National Aged Care Advocacy Program focuses on promoting access to advocacy for seniors from a non-English speaking background, their families, and carers. Further, ECCV suggests that the National Aged Care Advocacy Program works in close partnership with representatives of the multicultural aged care sector and their advocates in each State and Territory.

Recommendation 29

That the Australian Government embeds cultural competency training in the design of the CHSP to ensure all staff and managers understand how to provide culturally responsive care.

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