



**Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria's (ECCV) Response
To
The Development of the Brimbank Learning Strategy
Strategies II: Proposed Action for Life Phases: Youth
February 2010**

Background

1. The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the development of the Brimbank Learning Strategy. We commend the strategy's aim in advancing learning opportunities in each of the Local Areas of Brimbank.
2. Established in 1974 as a voluntary community-based organisation, ECCV advocates and lobbies all levels of government on behalf of multicultural communities in a range of areas. For over 30 years ECCV has remained the principal liaison point between ethnic communities, government and the wider community in Victoria. Our role includes supporting, consulting, liaising with and providing information to Victoria's ethnic communities.
3. ECCV believes that the provision of equal access to learning opportunities for disadvantaged individuals particularly youth is a vital condition for their equitable social and economic participation in our society. Thus, it is vital to enhance the learning capacity of culturally diverse disadvantaged groups to ensure that their social and economic outcomes are positively changed.

Youth from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

4. ECCV is concerned that a considerable number of youth from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) have cultural preferences and limited English language competence which can impact on their access to lifelong learning.
5. ECCV acknowledges that there are many challenges facing youth when navigating the education system. A segment of Australia's youth struggle to become active participants in Australian education due to a number of reasons, including, disrupted schooling, lack of support within their immediate environment where learning is viewed by their families as secondary to joining the workforce or traineeship, lack of support within the schooling system, and the remoteness of learning facilities.
6. ECCV recommends the development of innovative strategies to recognise learning challenges within standard educational programs and encourage flexible learning pathways so that a space is created for youth to work out what they need. For those

less suited to academic pathways, we recommend opening up alternative opportunities.

7. We also recommend that resources are allocated to youth whose needs do not exactly fit established funding and support criteria and that learning-based institutions show a longer term view of where youth can be once they follow available and alternative pathways.
8. ECCV recognises that learning challenges are compounded by procedural gaps when transitioning between education and employment. We are aware of the limited availability of opportunities for youth when seeking pathways and the minimal choices offered in industry based traineeships.
9. Barriers that affect youth from accessing the job market such as lack of training, work experience, financial security and erosion of confidence have potentially serious consequences and the most vulnerable continue to come from lower socio-economic status backgrounds. Thus, closer attention and action through policy is required to address the structural barriers to youth participation.
10. ECCV recommends the development of better connections between learning clubs, educational institutions, the ethnic community sector and employers to initiate and maintain employment opportunities for youth such as volunteering and work-based experiences. There is a shared communal responsibility to focus on training youth in employability skills to facilitate transition and advance learning. Most importantly, there is a need to build stronger partnerships between these systems so that their values, objectives and outcomes around the promotion of pathways are aligned.
11. An integrated services system must consider identifying and nurturing young natural leaders within ethnic communities to act as role models. This is because ECCV is of the view that leveraging from the experiences of youth who are success stories is an important step. Developing positive environments in learning community centres where the experiences of youth are tapped into and showcased is essential to shaping the experiences of others who need support. Youth story telling is an effective tool in bringing forth social change in attitudes and knowledge.
12. Additionally, developing family-centred practices and working with the family unit is necessary to enhance the capacity of parents to provide adequate support for their young, assist in building their esteem and encourage them to pursue learning opportunities.
13. A common frustration that hinders learning particularly amongst young members of new and emerging CALD communities is an inability to access public spaces or youth learning centres where they can enrol in learning programs and activities. These spaces can be a vital ingredient for cultural exchanges where youth can connect with other groups and build networks.
14. ECCV notes that youth related activities particularly sport is an effective way to promote inclusion, as it is an opportunity for CALD youth and in particular newly arrived young people to cultivate cross-cultural interpersonal friendships and develop a sense of belonging to their local area based on common interests. Such activities would also

provide an avenue to address discrimination, as well as develop life skills through teamwork and collaboration.

15. While there is a continuous trend in providing learning programs that promote literacy and language, numeracy and financial, skill and leadership development for youth, there are no suitable venues available to run these workshops. This appears to be due to demand for council venues by community groups exceeding supply.
16. ECCV suggests that there needs to be greater encouragement of linkages between community groups and sharing of facilities. We also recommend the construction of new venues to meet this demand and fast-tracking of investment into the expansion of existing venues.
17. Another challenge is the high transport costs and in some areas the lack of public transport services in outer metropolitan areas. These difficulties make accessing learning centres problematic. Therefore, ECCV calls for an improved public transport network that is safe, accessible, frequent, affordable and closely linked to activity centres as this would assist youth to better access learning clubs and libraries.

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