



**ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria**

Patron

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

ECCV Submission
to
FECCA
re the
Inquiry into the Abbott Government's Commission of
Audit

January 2014

About ECCV

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is one of FECCA's state peak advocacy body affiliates. The ECCV is the Voice of Multicultural Victoria and as the peak body for ethnic and multicultural organisations in Victoria, we are proud to have been the key advocate for culturally diverse communities in Victoria since 1974. For 40 years we have been the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community.

1. ECCV welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA) for inclusion in its submission to the above Inquiry.
2. ECCV applauds the Senate Select Committee for conducting an *Inquiry into the Abbott Government's Commission of Audit* in order to strengthen its budget and expenses. ECCV appreciates the opportunity to comment on the nature and extent of recent cuts and changes to Government expenditure around the provision of services and programs and how they will impact on ethnic and multicultural services and programs in Victoria.
3. ECCV community feedback indicates that recent government cuts, in particular regarding innovative employment initiatives, have seriously undermined public confidence government amongst the multicultural community. Several cuts have impacted detrimentally on ethnic and multicultural individuals and community organisations. ECCV believes it is crucial that the Coalition Government redress the issues presented in this submission to improve the wellbeing of Australia's multicultural communities and restore confidence.

Statewide Resources Centre
150 Palmerston Street
Carlton Victoria 3053

t 03 9349 4122
f 03 9349 4967
eccv@eccv.org.au
www.eccv.org.au

ABN 65071572705

Incorporations Number
A0027904K



**ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria**

Patron

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

Building Multicultural Communities Fund

4. ECCV is concerned about the cancellation of the *Building Multicultural Communities Fund* of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) that supports the infrastructure of charitable community volunteer organisations. Community organisations play a vital role in complementing the work of government funded service delivery. Several multicultural and ethnic organisations have already signed Funding Agreements for the 2013-14 BMCF, have spent their grant funds as instructed in the agreements and will be left out of pocket if their agreement is not honoured.
5. ECCV supports FECCA's letter to the Prime Minister on 8 January 2014 that explains how over 400 multicultural groups throughout Australia have been severely disadvantaged by these cuts.

Recommendation 1

That the Abbott Government honour the existing *Building Multicultural Communities Fund* agreements between the DIBP and various ethnic and multicultural organisations.

Migrant Communities Employment Fund

6. ECCV believes that the Australian Coalition Government's decision not to proceed with the Migrant Communities Employment Fund (MCEF) of the Department of Employment would be a retrograde step for jobseekers from culturally diverse backgrounds. The \$6.6 million allocated for two years to the MCEF was designed to redress high levels of unemployment amongst recent migrants and refugees. As 35 per cent of immigrants experience difficulties finding employment, ECCV believes there is a real risk of entrenched unemployment amongst some groups from culturally diverse backgrounds without such initiatives.
7. Many multicultural community groups enthusiastically submitted fresh and innovative applications to the MCEF with real solutions for addressing unemployment amongst new and emerging communities. Multicultural groups and organisations developed new and original approaches for strengthening partnerships with employers in Victoria. ECCV believes it is vital that the Abbott Government replaces the MCEF with a similar initiative that creates innovative community-driven solutions to improve employment outcomes for refugee and migrant job seekers.

Statewide Resources Centre
150 Palmerston Street
Carlton Victoria 3053

t 03 9349 4122
f 03 9349 4967
eccv@eccv.org.au
www.eccv.org.au

ABN 65071572705

Incorporations Number
A0027904K



**ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria**

Patron

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

Recommendation 2

That the Abbott Government allocates adequate funding for an innovative, community-driven initiative that provides immediate solutions to improve employment outcomes for refugee and migrant job seekers.

Commonwealth HACC Program

8. The continuation of culturally responsive aged care services in Victoria is a crucial issue with 31 per cent of the Victorian population aged over 65 from a non-English speaking background and even higher proportions for those aged over 75 (ABS Census 2011). Many older people from non-English speaking backgrounds are socially isolated and tend to access services when they reach a crisis in their health. ECCV has been providing advice to the Victorian public service on diversity planning in aged care. That has led to positive outcomes with improved culturally responsive HACC aged care policies and programs.
9. ECCV is aware of the new HACC arrangements where the Australian Government assumes responsibility for the HACC Program that provides support for older people. When Victoria, and Western Australia, transition to the Commonwealth HACC Program in July 2015, ECCV believes it is important to continue the existing culturally responsive aged care programs in ethnic and multicultural community-based organisations and to minimise any service delivery disruption.
10. ECCV plays an important role in ethnic aged care sector development, communication, stakeholder engagement and advice to the public service in Victoria.

Recommendation 3

That the Abbott Government ensures the continuation of culturally responsive aged care services in the transition to Commonwealth HACC aged care for Victoria, and Western Australia, in July 2015.

Immigration Health Advisory Group

11. ECCV believes the Government's recent decision to disband the Immigration Health Advisory Group (IHAG) is a step backwards in ensuring that asylum seekers and refugees receive appropriate health care.

Statewide Resources Centre
150 Palmerston Street
Carlton Victoria 3053

t 03 9349 4122
f 03 9349 4967
eccv@eccv.org.au
www.eccv.org.au

ABN 65071572705

Incorporations Number
A0027904K



**ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria**

Patron

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

12. ECCV notes that many former asylum seekers and refugees have traumatised backgrounds. ECCV feedback indicates that when their mental health and Post Traumatic Syndrome issues are dealt with promptly they tend to become productive participants in society, enhancing social cohesion.

Recommendation 4

That the Abbott Government establishes an independent body to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees receive appropriate health and mental health care.

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

Statewide Resources Centre
150 Palmerston Street
Carlton Victoria 3053

t 03 9349 4122
f 03 9349 4967
eccv@eccv.org.au
www.eccv.org.au

ABN 65071572705

Incorporations Number
A0027904K

