



Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Response

To

Department of Health Victoria

Review of HACC and SCP Social Support

and Respite Services

September 2010

Background

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) advocates and lobbies all levels of government on behalf of multicultural communities in a range of areas especially aged care.

ECCV welcomes the opportunity for consultation on the Review of HACC and SCP Social Support and Respite Services at the Department of Health.

ECCV has consulted widely with members on its Aged Care Policy Committee on HACC social support issues. The comments in this submission reflect their collective views.

ECCV acknowledges that within the framework of the HACC diversity planning, a significant proportion of Victoria's population of seniors would benefit from culturally responsive services. By 2011 approximately 38% of people over 65 years in the Melbourne metropolitan area and 2% in the Victorian rural and regional area will be from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (Howe 2006). In some local government areas that figure is already between 50% and 60%.

The HACC Program funds approximately 500 organisations across Victoria. Whilst the largest proportion is allotted to health providers and local councils, about 55 ethno-specific and multicultural organisations are funded to provide

Planned Activity Groups (PAGs) and Volunteer Coordination as part of the HACC social support and respite services.

ECCV Response to the Review Key Discussion Questions

1. Service planning

1.1 Resources for ASM implementation

Many non-English speaking and culturally diverse people have cultural perceptions that value dependency in ageing as a positive world-view. At the same time ethnic aged care research commissioned by ECCV (Radermacher et al 2008) shows that seniors with culturally diverse backgrounds choose to live at home longer than the average population of people over 65.

Staff and managers in the ethnic aged care sector have received considerable training in the principles of the HACC Active Service Model (ASM) and are aware of the Well for Life projects.

ECCV supports the ASM as an effective quality improvement service delivery approach that promotes person-centred care, independence in day-to-day living for older people to stay at home longer and increased choice and control.

ECCV therefore advocates that the ASM should be introduced to ethnic seniors, in social support and respite programs, slowly and gently with adequate languages support. Ideally such new ways of thinking are better conveyed by trusted agencies within ethnic communities. Staff in ethno-specific PAGs requires additional time and resource allocation to ensure their agencies have the capacity to effectively introduce the ASM principles to ethnic seniors.

1.2 Transport

ECCV would like to see an acknowledgment of the need for transport support for PAGs that goes across the Department of Health catchment regions and LGAs (Local Government Areas) to enable more ethnic seniors to attend same-language and culture PAGs.

2. Service delivery

2.1 Broad role of social support programs

PAGs are an ideal model for caring for the ethnic aged which provides opportunities for a high degree of creativity and flexibility to address cultural preferences within the local neighbourhood for ethnic seniors.

PAGs are generally promoted as programs that provide social connectedness for ethno-specific groups of seniors. Diversity planning should recognise the broader role of ethno-specific social support programs. For example they are an ideal avenue for the provision of information on active ageing, seniors' rights, financial literacy and health literacy. In addition they facilitate access to a wider range of HACC Living at Home services as well as recognise a person's rights to maintain their cultural identity.

2.2 SWOT analysis of ethnic and multicultural sector

ECCV conducted several SWOT analyses with members of the Aged Care Policy Committee and representatives of related organisations on the area of ethnic aged care and related services such as elder abuse prevention and mental health support in ethnic communities. The outcomes are broad comments that can be applied to the HACC social support area as many of the agencies consulted also provide PAGs. The outcomes are listed in the summary table.

<p>Strengths (internal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic and multicultural community aged care (EMCAC) sector has specialised culturally competent expertise. • EMCAC organisations provide bilingual and bicultural staff. • Ethnic seniors have high levels of trust with EMCAC agencies. • EMCAC sector has well-established CALD networks • Supported Access Pilot Program in EMCAC assists HACC partnerships • Effective promotion networks exist via ethnic radio and bilingual ethnic newspapers • Numerous resources exist on culturally diverse community profiles 	<p>Weaknesses (internal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited capacity to network outside CALD networks • Small ethnic agencies lack staff time to do administrative compliance work • Resources are focused on direct care work • Ethnic seniors lack knowledge and information about rights and services • Ethnic seniors have varying English language skills • Social isolation of ethnic seniors leads to greater dependency on family
<p>Opportunities (external) New HACC diversity framework developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acknowledges EMCAC strengths • promotes culturally responsive service provision 	<p>Threats (external)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of cultural responsiveness training, resources and guide in aged care sector • Ineffective links between CALD networks and health care partnerships

SWOT analysis of EMCAC organisations conducted by ECCV in 2009 and 2010

2.3 Change management strategies - partnerships

Appropriate change management strategies would involve a restructure of resources to ethno-specific HACC providers and smaller organisations to enable

increased networking and partnerships with health and local council HACC providers.

Currently partnerships are scattered, sporadic and sometimes depend on goodwill. ECCV would like to see regulated partnership requirements in funding agreements as well as diversity policy and planning.

A restructure of resources that strengthens the partnership capacity of ethno-specific PAG Coordinators with local councils would ensure they are adequately networked and supported to better focus their services around seniors' cultural preferences and on active ageing.

The findings of the Monash University research *Practising Positive Partnerships in Ethnic and Multicultural Organisations* (2010) commissioned by ECCV highlights strategies to facilitate partnerships such as:

- Addressing equal power relationships especially between large organisations and small ethnic agencies
- Resourcing initial time taken to establish effective working relationships
- Developing inter-agency capacity and relationships of trust
- Allocations to small HACC providers to attend networking meetings

3. Responsiveness to clients

3.1 Assessment

ECCV would like to see greater use of culturally responsive SCTT Tools used for the assessment of clients with culturally, linguistically and spiritually diverse backgrounds. In addition more joint inter-agency assessments and joint Care Plan reviews with ethnic aged care staff and SAP workers would assist in identifying, and responding to personal culturally diverse preferences.

ECCV would like to see improved links between HACC assessors and ethno-specific PAGs and Volunteer Coordinators to make the range of localised aged care services more transparent and to better implement the ASM principles at the initial contact point.

3.2 Minimising social isolation of ethnic seniors

Ethno-specific PAGs provide an important service response to social isolation in ethnic communities. Considerable research indicates that increased contact with same-language and culture groups improves physical and emotional health and aligns with the Well for Life principles.

Ethnic friendly visiting programs play an important role in supporting lonely residents with culturally diverse backgrounds.

Anecdotal feedback from ECCV stakeholders indicates that the current level of ethno-specific social support programs does not meet the community demand.

4. Effective models of social support and respite

4.1 Existing best practice models

ECCV is aware of several effective models of ethno-specific social support and respite programs that provide a range of flexible approaches to meet the preferences of seniors with culturally diverse backgrounds. These are:

- Ethno-specific PAGs in large and small ethnic and multicultural organisations – these models connect isolated and non-English speaking seniors with same-language and culture groups, provide culturally diverse meals and information about active ageing and healthy living.
- Moorleigh Seniors Centre, Bentleigh – provides a wide range of ethno-specific activities in one large multi-purpose venue for seniors with Greek, Italian, Arabic-speaking and Chinese-speaking backgrounds. Examples are ethno-specific PAGs, bilingual exercise groups, internet classes, bilingual health literacy sessions, bus outings and culturally diverse meals. The ethnic seniors develop a sense of belonging at the Seniors' Centre where they feel confident their cultural preferences are respected and acknowledged.
- 'No wrong door' approach to PAGs at the South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre where ethnic seniors can enter the groups through a wide range of avenues.
- Supporting Carers via the Gippsland Multicultural Services - provides best practice support for ethnic carers in a rural setting with a strong focus on transport and locally customised activities. These are simply and best described as, "Its just what you do."
- Partnerships home-based respite group model for Greek-speaking seniors conducted jointly by Fronditha Care and Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre Southern Region – provides a model for both in-home support and inter-agency alliance processes.
- Volunteer Coordination of Friendly Visiting Programs at the Australian Greek Welfare Society - provide one-to-one support for isolated ethnic carers and lonely non-English speaking people with disabilities.
- Bus outings through ethno-specific PAGs – provide an alternative to day groups

5. Future directions

5.1 Safety in public spaces

ECCV is aware of anecdotal stories of ethnic seniors, with dementia and mobility disabilities, getting lost in large suburban shopping centres when accompanied by their elderly partners. This suggests that further exploration of local drop-off

facilities for frail seniors in public spaces such as air-conditioned shopping centre, would provide much-needed support to enable isolated ethnic seniors who are carers with limited support networks, to confidently maintain their independence.

5.2 Growth in ethno-specific PAGs

PAGs that are connected to ethnic and multicultural agencies provide an ideal model for innovation based on creativity and flexibility. A particular strength of the social support program is that it allows ethnic and multicultural agencies to customise activities to suit the culturally diverse needs and interests of locally-based groups. Ethnic seniors look forward to physically getting out and attending ethno-specific PAGs where they feel a strong sense of belonging. Positive feelings of belonging increases ethnic seniors' independence and therefore improve their health and wellbeing.

5.3 Flexible transport support

Transport provision that crosses boundaries created by departmental catchments and LGAs is particularly important to provide a cost-effective approach which would increase opportunities for scattered, isolated ethnic seniors to attend same-culture groups.

5.4. Locating HACC in ethnic organisations

Ethnic and multicultural organisations have considerable cultural and bilingual expertise. They are well-placed to deliver culturally responsive HACC programs. ECCV would like to see their role and capacity as HACC providers strengthened.

5.5 Resourcing partnerships

A restructure of resource allocation with built-in time for networking and attending inter-agency meetings would enable smaller ethnic organisations to form effective partnerships with health and local council networks.

6. Conclusion

The HACC social support and respite services play a crucial role in meeting the needs of a growing number of frail older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The program provides the ideal opportunity for increased creativity and flexibility. It would be strengthened by official encouragement to customise physical, social and cultural activities to increase the localised sense of belonging thus improving the independence and quality of life of Victoria's ethnic seniors.

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