



ECCV Elder Abuse Prevention Position Paper January 2010

Background

ECCV recognises that elder abuse can adversely affect all Victorians regardless of linguistic, ethnic or cultural origin. ECCV supports and promotes older people being informed, resourced, supported and empowered to address the issue of elder abuse within their own lives and within their communities, in particular within culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

ECCV supports the Victorian Government's definition of abuse as any act causing harm to older persons, that is carried out by someone they know and trust such as family and friends. Abuse of older people may be physical, social, financial, psychological or sexual; and can include mistreatment and neglect.

ECCV feedback indicates that the concept of elder abuse is not well understood in ethnic communities. Since there is a strong preference for older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to stay at home longer rather than seek institutional care, it is important to preserve their safety, security and dignity according to the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

By 2011 people over 65 from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will represent 38% of the over 65 population of Melbourne and 31% in Victoria. Whilst specific data on elder abuse is fairly limited, Australian studies estimate the prevalence of elder abuse across the general population is between 1% and 5%. It is highly likely that those figures are under-estimations due to under-reporting of abuse for reasons of loyalty to families, fear for consequences and lack of understanding of what constitutes abuse.

ECCV Elder Abuse Prevention Policy Principles

1. ECCV acknowledges that the Victorian Government, through the Office of Senior Victorians and the Department of Planning and Community Development, is leading a whole-of-government approach to elder abuse prevention in the community and that ECCV was extensively consulted.
2. ECCV supports Seniors Rights Victoria as the primary government-funded destination for older Victorians, their friends and family members to seek information and support relating to elder abuse.
3. ECCV encourages non-English speaking seniors as well as ethnic and multicultural community organisations to make use of the telephone information, support and referral

services provided by Seniors Rights Victoria along with free telephone interpreters where needed.

4. ECCV welcomes and supports the Victorian Government practice guidelines *With Respect to Age 2009* for the prevention of elder abuse.

5. ECCV would like to see elder abuse involving ethnic families, carers, communities and individuals addressed by service providers within a culturally responsive framework to respond appropriately and sensitively to culturally diverse traditions and expectations.

6. The ECCV Multicultural Aged Care Directory 2009 is a useful resource to providing names of some ethnic welfare agencies and multicultural groups that can provide CALD specialised resources. Order forms are available on the ECCV website.

7. ECCV in conjunction with the Department of Planning and Community Development, provides a range of web based resources developed in partnership with Victorian and Australian Government representatives, peak bodies and ethno-specific welfare agencies and multicultural organisations, these include:

- Two Victorian Government Elder Abuse Prevention strategy factsheets supplied by the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) and translated into 14 languages:

Seniors Factsheet (May 2009): *Elder Abuse – together we can prevent it* and

General Factsheet (May 2009): *What is Elder Abuse?*

- PowerPoint presentations, speeches and reports of ECCV forums on elder abuse prevention and awareness in the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups.
- A Discussion Paper entitled *Reclaiming Respect and Dignity: Elder Abuse Prevention in Ethnic Communities*
- Golden Years Issue #97 featuring the theme “Elder Abuse Prevention and Awareness in Multicultural Communities”
- Refer www.eccv.org.au

8. ECCV calls on the Victorian Government to continue the production and dissemination of translations on elders’ rights and elder abuse prevention in languages other than English relevant to the needs of ageing culturally diverse communities.

9. ECCV welcomes its strategic alliance with the Office of Senior Victorians to provide culturally competent elder abuse awareness raising education sessions to service providers in the Melbourne metropolitan area as well as regional Victoria. ECCV calls for continued culturally responsive education sessions facilitated by the Victorian Government to families, individuals and carers in ethnic communities as well as service providers.

10. ECCV recognises the specialised expertise of ethnic community based organisations in the areas of cultural competency advice, briefing and sensitively training. Accordingly ECCV would like to see more policy emphasis on the culturally competent delivery of community education and information sessions on elder abuse in ethnic communities through accessing such expertise.