

ECCV Pre-Budget 2016-17 Submission to Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance

February 2016

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Inc. (ECCV) is the voice of multicultural Victoria and the peak policy advocacy body for eight regional ethnic community councils and up to 220 members including ethnic and multicultural organisations across Victoria since 1974. During this time, we have been the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community. ECCV policy and advocacy staff manages five policy advisory committees where representatives and experts from multicultural and mainstream organisations, service providers, academics and the private sector advise ECCV on current issues.

This submission includes a background summary based on policy analysis and ECCV community consultations with Victorian ethnic and multicultural organisations, local government and multicultural service providers over the previous 12 months on the effectiveness of the 2015 Victorian State Budget for multicultural Victorians. It addresses the context of a major restructure of the functions of government that oversee that multicultural investment. It provides the context for recommendations for specific funding areas to address gaps in services for culturally diverse Victorians.

This submission consists of the following sections

- A background summary that discusses the overall impact of the 2015 Budget on multicultural Victoria
- Recommendations to support Regional Victorian Peak Multicultural Organisation Funding for eight regional Ethnic Community Councils (ECCs).
- A proposal for a new funding model for the ECCV in addition to its core funding from Office of Multiculturalism and Citizenship (OMAC) to grow its role in identifying gaps for culturally diverse and settlement communities; and to assist the government to save money to meet diversity policies across regional Victoria.
- Recommendations for funding allocations in five areas to address gaps in specific service provision for culturally diverse Victorians

1. A Background Summary: The Impact of the 2015 Budget

- 1.1. ECCV was pleased that the 2015 Budget allocated \$74 million over four years to multicultural affairs, which was hailed by the Minister for Multiculturalism as “the single largest investment in that area in the state’s history.” The bulk of these funds are managed under the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s Multicultural Affairs Policy and Programs output, with \$200,000 for the House of World Cultures Feasibility Study managed by the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources’

Access, Industry Development and Innovation output. While ECCV does not have access to precise amounts, it endeavoured to consult with the relevant agencies in an effort to provide some background for its submission to Treasury for the 2016-17 State Budget

- 1.2. Central to the Government's \$74 million total investment in multiculturalism has been an emphasis on social cohesion. Approximately \$45.9 million (or 62% of total investment) was allocated to social cohesion across two categories (one for 'community harmony' across 4 years). ECCV finds that the establishment of resources for social cohesion has been well realised over the past 12 months through the creation of the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Community Resilience Ministerial Taskforce (Taskforce). Its role is to "lead Victoria in adopting a whole-of-community collaborative approach to building resilience and strengthening social cohesion." The Taskforce then created the Community Resilience Unit (CRU) which has a role in managing funds allocated in the 2015 budget for Social Cohesion and Community Harmony. In July 2015 a Ministerial media release explained that the government was realigning the functions within the Multicultural Affairs portfolio to strengthen the strategic role of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC).

The Taskforce itself has a budget of \$4 million over four years to fund the Research Institute on Social Cohesion (RIOS) and a Social Cohesion Research Grants Program totalling \$500,000 a year for four years (\$2 million). ECCV was informed that the CRU has established a community grants program to meet strategic goals for social cohesion. It remains unclear to ECCV which part of the overall social cohesion investment falls into 4 year consecutive or one year funding.

- 1.3. The Victoria Multicultural Commission (VMC) community grants provide valuable support to ethnic and multicultural community organisations. Both community grants for VMC and Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC) are managed through OMAC. Given some delays in restructuring, it was confirmed to ECCV that community grants so far total approximate \$20 million (or 27% of the Government's initial investment).
- 1.4. ECCV was unable to ascertain how any delays in offering community grants due to the realignment would affect funding projections for the 2016-17 State Budget. ECCV was unable to ascertain where the \$13.2 million for capacity building funds sit within OMAC managed community grants and include a section below on 'capacity building' across the investment. ECCV assumes that the \$11.1 million over four years for community infrastructure and cultural precincts is progressing well and welcome future updates from the government. These factors sit within the context of the realignment of function of OMAC and ECCV's policy and advocacy submission to Treasury has endeavoured to present a picture as clearly with the information made publically available to the sector and to ECCV staff.

The impact of the realignment of function within the investment for multicultural Victorians

- 1.5. While ECCV has a recognised framework to consult and advise government on social cohesion, it also consults and advocates for a wide range of issues to ensure that multicultural Victorians have equal access to services and opportunities.

ECCV's policy position since the 2015 State Budget is that multiculturalism is not violent extremism. A broadly defined 'social cohesion' strategy in itself does not meet the breadth and scope of challenges facing multicultural Victorians as described in part by

ECCV's 2015 Budget Review (**Attachment 1**). ECCV community consultation finds that policy issues which affect social cohesion often fall outside of multicultural community grant and social cohesion grant criteria. It is frequently left to the word 'capacity-building' to address complex policy issues.

- 1.6 ECCV considers that disproportionate funding priorities between multiculturalism and social cohesion is weakening investment across a wide range of issues for multicultural Victorians. While social cohesion has relevance across issues such as employment, family violence and youth, social cohesion grants that are concerned with violent extremism may not possess adequate policy knowledge to address such issues in depth.

ECCV community consultations indicate that ethnic, multicultural and faith community groups are finding themselves tailoring vital community engagement activities to meet the 'social cohesion' clause in funding grant eligibility.

The above described funding delays and refocus is creating "gaps" in programs targeting hard to reach members of the community that ensure equal access to services and programs. This is especially the case for new and emerging communities.

Co-creation and capacity building

- 1.7 The CRU's Strategic Framework has prioritised "co-creation" with communities across a range of barriers where a partnership with government agencies with specialised programs may be more successful. ECCV supports more across-government progress to address the lack of diversity and access that shadows government departments, as made clear each year by the Victorian Attorney General's Office (VAGO) auditing reports. ECCV feedback, however, indicates a lack of clarity around funding grants.
- 1.8 ECCV considers that the Victorian Government emphasis on social cohesion outcomes has been set too broadly to include issues traditionally managed by other sections of government where multicultural organisations and communities have long-standing relationships. Ethnic and multicultural community organisations find themselves with unclear funding opportunities, or funding for their particular portfolio issues tied to social cohesion.

Whilst capacity building is increasingly linked to social cohesion, it dilutes the focus on various government portfolio areas such as health, family violence and healthy aging. Examples of issues where social cohesion grants and government funded agency programs cross over include employment, aged care, homelessness, diversity training, responsible gambling, health, financial literacy, interpreter and language services, family violence, and imprisonment rates among culturally diverse Victorians. Many of these issues fall under the core business of various agencies across-government. A by-product of many of their successful programs is capacity building. Capacity building, however, is complex. Since the 2015 budget, and subsequent realignment of function for multicultural investment, ECCV community consultation finds that the term is used very loosely in the context of social cohesion.

ECCV considers that CRU's definition of social cohesion tends to weaken commitment to multicultural investment, for example ECCV was unable to attain information on any clear differences of 'capacity building' grants between OMAC, VMC and CRU in the context of the \$13.2million "capacity building" category in the 2015 State Budget.

Consultations from ethnic specific service providers, diverse communities and local councils point to the need for a more coordinated approach within the State government to harmonise the disparate funding created by the broad use of this terms in funding criteria. ECCV have been unable to attain information to answer community enquires as to how the \$13.2 million of Capacity Building funds is distributed.

Recommendation 1

ECCV recommends that Treasury attempts to clarify capacity building funding criteria in the 2016 Budget to avoid it becoming an all-encompassing category that it unintentionally links social cohesion with core businesses across government agencies.

2. Regional Victoria

- 2.1 ECCV represents eight Ethnic Communities Councils throughout regional Victoria in the Mildura, Morwell, Albury-Wodonga, Shepparton, Ballarat, Bendigo and Wangaratta. Those multicultural agencies provide a combination of policy advocacy and service delivery to isolated seniors from culturally diverse backgrounds as well as some settlement services to new and emerging communities and employment support.

Ongoing funding is needed across regional Victoria to support current and innovative ECC pilot projects that address gaps in government service delivery. This will avoid repeat expenditure to establish networks, a service infrastructure and costly evaluation frameworks which are currently in progress but at great cost to regional ECCs.

ECCV therefore advocates for on-going Peak Multicultural Organisation Funding across the eight regional ECCs to save on unnecessary additional public expenses for regional consultation, regional diversity training, accessing regional multicultural communities, and program development.

- 2.2 A typical example from the eight regional ECCs is the North East Multicultural Association (NEMA). It has demonstrated initiative by identifying service delivery gaps in government services and part funding innovative solutions in partnerships with local organisations. NEMA sees opportunities for the Victorian Government to reduce costs on metropolitan based consultants travelling to regional areas. It is well placed and eager to work with the Government to assist in building cultural competence and responsiveness of government services in a historically underserved regional area. Four of NEMA's projects include: International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Citizenship Test Training, Cultural Diversity Training and Multicultural Business Development (MBD).
- 2.3 ECCV details two best practice cases that show how the ECC's are able to provide quality services that offset any increase in investment for Peak Multicultural Organisation Funding through cost savings to the government in other areas.

NEMA Best Practice 1: Cultural Diversity Training (CDT)

In North East Victoria, there was a service gap in local Cultural Diversity Training (CDT) service providers. As a consequence of this, local organisations were required to source CDT from Metropolitan Melbourne at a significant cost (due to travel and accommodation allowances). NEMA canvassed organisations in North East Victoria and determined their needs for CDT training. With consultation and feedback from the CALD community, NEMA then designed a pilot, fee-for-service CDT model to deliver in North East Victoria.

Evaluation feedback from the CDT has been extremely positive. NEMA has also established extensive and significant local contacts to both consult and promote CDT. NEMA has a sound and innovative business model that could be utilised by other regional peak organisations with an established need.

b) NEMA Best Practice 2: Multicultural Business Development (MBD)

Some of the migrants arriving in NEMA's geographical area (the LGAs of Wangaratta, Benalla, Indigo, Alpine, & Mansfield), relocate to Melbourne for a variety of reasons, including a lack of viable business opportunities. ECCV notes that what is missing in this region is a resource to link migrant business operators with existing business development programs and services. NEMA, through its professional networks, is beginning to connect with state and federal agencies such as Business Victoria to create a targeted program to link businesses run by migrants in the region into existing business development programs/systems. This will strengthen multicultural businesses in the region by:

- enhancing the capabilities of small businesses to be viable in this region,
- creating employment opportunities, and
- increasing the likelihood of migrant business owners and their families remaining in the region.
- creating employment opportunities for settlement communities.

Recommendation 2

ECCV recommends ongoing funding for Regional Victorian Peak Organisation Funding to support initiatives targeting culturally diverse and settlement communities in regional Victoria.

3. Relocation of ECCV

- 3.1 ECCV applauds the 25 per cent adjustment increase to its funding to in the 2015 State Budget that is in the context of keeping up with increasing costs across the not for profit sector and exponential growth in its advocacy work.

The Victorian Education Department informed the ECCV that it would need to vacate its premises at the State Resources Centre in Carlton by July 2016 as the site will be redeveloped. ECCV has had consistent bi-partisan support for affordable premises. The

Victorian Department of Education continues to assist ECCV to find office space within one of its schools outside of a 10km radius of the Melbourne CBD in a climate of increased demand for classroom space. Increasing business and residential growth in the inner central Melbourne area is no longer affordable on ECCV's budget which has no leasing of premise component built into it.

Recommendation 3

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government provide relocation and refurbishment costs to relocate ECCV in premises within a 10 km radius of the CBD.

4. A New Policy Advocacy Funding Model

- 4.1. ECCV advocates to three levels of government on policy gaps on behalf of its 220 members and stakeholders that represent Victorian ethnic and multicultural organisations.

ECCV focusses its community feedback through four active policy advisory committees for Women, New and Emerging Communities, Aged Care, Health, and Employment, Education and Training while a Drugs Taskforce is run by volunteers. Due to a lack of advocacy in some policy areas, ECCV conducted additional advocacy for culturally diverse energy consumers, social cohesion and languages in 2015.

- 4.2. ECCV is continually challenged in diversifying its funding base. After legal advice confirmed that ECCV does not qualify for deductible gift recipient status (DGR) ECCV has had work around a limited capacity in attracting donations and investment. ECCV is currently core funded by OMAC for policy advocacy work. OMAC funds two and half policy officers who work to capacity to identify and advocate for policy gaps to ensure that Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds do not miss out on access to basic human rights services in areas such as health, aged care and employment support.

In addition The Department of Health and Human Services funds ECCV for one policy officer and one sectoral development officer who work solely on aged care issues and manage an Advisory Committee. ECCV highlights this successful example of a government department providing dedicated policy and advocacy resources to represent culturally diverse seniors in the specific government portfolio area of aged care. ECCV proposes to explore and expand this model

- 4.3. ECCV therefore proposes a new funding model to assist both communities and government adapt to increasing demand, improve communication between sectors and across government through structured support through ECCV's community consultation, policy and advocacy framework, its culturally diverse networks and high-level of community trust.

ECCV advocates for various government departments to each fund a policy officer at ECCV in a specific portfolio area where policy barriers for vulnerable culturally diverse Victorians are persistent.

This pilot model requires additional policy advocacy positions to be considered from the following areas of identified priority need:

- Arts/Creative industries
- Family Violence
- Employment
- Health
- Energy
- Small Business Development

Recommendation 4

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government resource a number of government departments to provide additional ECCV policy officers to identify policy gaps, improve policy development and communication of diversity issues across government departments.

5. Multicultural Funding in the 2016 State Budget

- 5.1. As discussed in the Background section of this submission, the 2015 State Budget's \$74M multicultural specific funding was divided into broad categories of which 62% went into social cohesion investment. Smaller funding categories directed at the ethnic and multicultural communities through the VMC and OMAC Community Grants provide effective support, however, consultation indicates that many new and emerging community groups are missing out.
- 5.2. ECCV community consultation with Victorian members and stakeholders indicates a shortfall in multicultural funding allocations in specific areas such as:
 - Employment
 - Health (including aged care)
 - Settlement services and programs in regional areas
 - Family violence
 - Energy
 - Drugs

6. Employment

- 6.1. ECCV community consultation highlighted in Work Solutions Discussion Paper (2014) stated that out that opportunities to find full-time work have decreased dramatically over the past 25 years with increasing numbers of young people more susceptible to long term unemployment than the rest of the population with higher representations in casualised industries. Young people from recently arrived backgrounds and refugees are at greater

risk of leaving education earlier than their local-born counterparts and therefore are represented more highly in the jobless rates. This has been recognised in social cohesion strategies, however, ECCV are concerned that the complexity of the problem requires employment specific funding for specialised services, and not as adjuncts to social cohesion funding. Recent community feedback has indicated little change in areas and in particular regarding specialised employment training programs; employment support services; and employment law services.

- 6.2. The 2015 Budget's combined \$350M for Education and Training, which included the \$50M TAFE Back to Work Fund, were welcomed by ECCV. In the previous year ECCV community feedback indicates insufficient funding for specialised employment training programs emerged from those funds, which have focused on employer incentives. This focus has not adequately benefited skilled migrants including unemployed or under employed young people from culturally diverse and refugee backgrounds. ECCV recommend specific and targeted allocation of funding within Back To Work for community based 'work-ready' training that includes mentoring and work placements. Specialised employment training is needed to address systemic unemployment for culturally diverse communities.
- 6.3. ECCV recognise that barriers to employment for culturally diverse communities are a matter for all ages, including skilled and qualified migrants not getting jobs in their area of expertise. Whilst opportunities for specialised employment support services exist they are not reaching younger people from culturally diverse backgrounds. ECCV consultation indicated a need for improved cultural competency in specialised employment youth services to increase the uptake of traineeships and apprenticeships by culturally diverse youth.
- 6.4. ECCV acknowledges Job Active employment services are failing to connect with culturally diverse Job Seekers. One Victorian Local Council found that:
 - Some newly arrived humanitarian migrants with low English proficiency are being asked to look for up to 20 jobs per month despite being in a full-time AMEP class.
 - Some Jobactive providers do not use interpreters, yet expect clients to sign their job plans without understanding the content of job plans.
 - Some clients miss out on English classes to cope with their job search requirements. Immediate allocation of specific funding for targeted employment training for culturally diverse youth in Victoria in the 2016 Budget.
- 6.4.1. This shows low levels of cultural competency and resources to effectively deal with the complex issues that disadvantaged job seekers from migrant and refugee backgrounds face. ECCV recommend the Victorian Government invest in specialised employment services especially with young people.
- 6.5. Specialised employment law services receive a low profile during heightened awareness of migrant worker exploitation. ECCV consultation finds a need to fund existing and new targeted employment law services for migrant communities. The growing awareness of worker exploitation across all sectors of the workforce typified by the 7 Eleven worker exploitation case highlights the limitations of current labour hire practices for migrants concentrated in casualised and insecure work. Best practice face to face specialised

employment law services and education programs in one community legal centre has gathered enough data to show that exploitation among migrant workers persists despite legislating for fair work practices. ECCV support further investment in government departments to stop worker exploitation among migrant communities. ECCV also recommend establishing employment law hubs (to provide education, legal assistance and other services).

Recommendation 5

ECCV recommends allocating new, or redirecting funds from Back to Work, for specialized employment services for disadvantaged job seekers from migrant and refugee backgrounds in key areas including: employment training programs, employment support services, and employment law services.

Recommendation 6

ECCV recommends allocation of funding for research partnerships for ECCV to review the models currently in use used to ensure appropriate recognition processes by trade associations, professional bodies and employer organisations in a fair and transparent manner.

Recommendation 7

ECCV recommends allocation of funding for mobile employment law hubs which can be 'pop-up' to provide employment law advice to targeted communities in various geographic locations.

7. Health/Aged Care

- 7.1. ECCV also commends the Victorian government for their work promoting healthy ageing and age friendly cities and for committing for another three years to ECCV's community education project to increase awareness of elder abuse in ethnic communities. This additional three years funding permits ECCV to extend the community education project to another six communities: the Croatian and Polish communities, the Vietnamese and Indian communities, the Jewish community, and the Italian and Arabic-speaking communities.
- 7.2. There is an increasing trend for digitisation across government services which are having an adverse effect on seniors in ethnic communities, especially ethnic senior citizens clubs

who are experiencing difficulty with the new online reporting compliance for their long established clubs. Seniors with limited English language proficiency and low computer literacy will be increasingly disadvantaged.

7.3. Homelessness amongst culturally diverse seniors: In the previous budget the Victorian Government announced \$40.3 million (across 4 years) for Homelessness Innovation Action Projects to target early intervention for individuals at risk of homelessness, which included guaranteed funding for 4 years for the Housing for the Aged Action Group's (HAAG) 'Home at Last Program'.. In December 2015, ECCV and HAAG released a joint paper *ECCV-HAAG Paper - At Risk of Homelessness - Preventing Homelessness in Older Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities*, based on the finding of the project. Two of the key policy recommendations in this paper were:

- DHHS need to adequately resource services to work with culturally diverse seniors by providing for additional specialist/bi-lingual staff and for the increased use of translating and interpreting services.
- Ethno-specific and multicultural community services need to receive secure and targeted community development funding so that they can continue to be the key educators and provide pathways for culturally diverse communities to access services.

Recommendation 8

ECCV recommends allocation of funding for DHHS to continue to adequately resource services from specialist/bi-lingual staff and for the increased use of translating and interpreting services.

Recommendation 9

ECCV recommends allocation of funding specifically for capacity building for ethno-specific community services for culturally diverse aged care.

Recommendation 10

ECCV recommends allocation of funding to implement and build upon digital literacy programs for, and responsive to, culturally diverse seniors, including seniors clubs, to assist them with moving into the digital age.

8. Settlement Services and Programs

- 8.1. The settlement of refugees and newly arrived migrants in regional Victoria raises many issues including access to employment and training, health, social cohesion, youth and education. ECCV see settlement and local council services as issues for all three tiers of government in Victoria.
- 8.2. There is some concern that local councils in Victoria will need to increase their resources to cater for an increase in the Syrian & Iraqi refugee intake. While people will get access to the services and support normally offered to humanitarian entrants, no additional support for community service providers or local council services has been offered by either the State or Federal Government.
- 8.3. ECCV recommends allocating funds to select local councils experiencing higher than average demand on their services due to increases in residents from new and emerging communities. This will strengthen the financial impact on local councils in the following areas:
 - early years services (e.g. kindergarten places and hours and maternal and child health services)
 - youth services
 - disability services
 - grief and trauma counselling services
 - employment and training service.

Recommendation 11

ECCV recommends allocation of funding to sustain and develop services in select local councils experiencing higher than average demand on their services due to increase in residents from new and emerging communities.

9. Family Violence

- 9.1. While the 2015 budget's overall funding for family and domestic violence was encouraging, feedback to ECCV indicates that the \$2 million funding for Family and Domestic Violence allocated in 2015 over two years is not being directed at ethno-specific or multicultural communities. ECCV were unable to ascertain the extent to which the \$2 million (over two years) supports women and children from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- 9.2. It is well known that there are additional barriers for culturally diverse communities in accessing and using family violence and children services, and that a diversity of views in developing programs will improve this. ECCV made a submission to the Royal Commission on Family Violence detailing changes to programs in 2015. ECCV was also informed that the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Children in Out of Home Care currently has no ethnic/ multicultural representation on it.

ECCV community feedback indicates:

- 9.3. The need to ensure the ready access to interpreters. In family violence, first responders police usually rely on the children or the perpetrator to interpret for the women, which means that there is either misinformation, or lack of recognition of the trauma to the child, who may be interpreting violence (which may include sexual violence) perpetuated by their father towards their mother.
- 9.4. Adequately resource community engagement units within Victoria Police to build trust and understanding of the role of the police with culturally diverse communities in their area.
- 9.5. Efforts by Victoria Police to recruit more people from the ethnic communities need to be resourced to take advantage of the opportunity to support newly graduated culturally diverse recruits to practice bilingual policing.

Specific funding grants need to focus on the following areas:

- Sustainability of multicultural family violence organisations.
- Culturally specific strategies for recruitment of foster carers.
- Programs to address cultural competence of family duty lawyers, with at least 2.0EFT for lawyers at courts with higher culturally diverse populations to enable lawyers to attend the courts 1-2 times a week and provide ongoing family law support. Courts include Sunshine, Dandenong, Melbourne, Heidelberg and Broadmeadows.
- From the \$2 million 2015 funding, provision of specialised culturally appropriate legal support to the most vulnerable CALD women, including immigration support to women without permanent residency who can access Family Violence Provisions under the Migration Act.
- From the \$2 million for men's behaviour change programs, there has been no funding for culturally specific men's behaviour change programs or funding to sustain existing men's behaviour change programs for Vietnamese and Arabic speaking men.

Recommendation 12

ECCV recommends allocation of funding to sustain and develop existing culturally specific family violence organisations and programs.

Recommendation 13

ECCV recommends allocation of funding for recruitment of culturally diverse foster carers.

Recommendation 14

ECCV recommends allocation of funding within family duty lawyers funds for cultural competence training, and lawyers in courts with high ratios of clients from culturally diverse communities.

Recommendation 15

ECCV recommends allocation of funding for men's behaviour change to specifically include culturally diverse men's behaviour change programs.

10. Energy

- 10.1. In 2015 ECCV responded to an Essential Services Commission (ESC) inquiry with *ECCV Submission ToThe Victorian Essential Services Commission's Supporting Customers, Avoiding Labels: Energy Hardship Inquiry Draft Report, September 2015*. ECCV recommended that the ESC retains the categories of "hardship provisions", "vulnerable consumer" and the need for retailers to consider the consumer's "capacity to pay". We also questioned sweeping changes to retail energy regulation that questioned the energy retail sector's cultural capacity to accurately identify, communicate and support (or refer) vulnerable CALD consumers to appropriate "Active Assistance Programs" before disconnection. One concern raised was that such programs depend on an assumption that the culturally specific community legal sector advice is available within a community legal education (CLE) sector already struggling to sustain itself.
- 10.2. ECCV recommended that the ESC provide bilingual awareness-raising to CALD consumers about shared retailer and consumer responsibility; and provide tools to support retailers to provide culturally responsive/bilingual awareness sessions on how to undergo legal appeal as CALD energy consumers. The ESC was asked to consider seeking more data on the effectiveness of ethno-specific energy programs currently provided by retailers and the capacity of the CLE sector to provide effective "Active Assistance Programs" as referral services.
- 10.3. In 2015 ECCV's pilot Multicultural Communities Energy Education Project (MCEE) was funded by the Victorian Department of State Development, Business and Innovation (DSDBI) which established the Energy Information Fund (EIF) to educate and empower groups that may not be reached by mainstream information campaign, to enable them to make informed decisions about electricity. This project involved employing bilingual energy educators (BEEs) within a broader community education campaign that involved face to face sessions. The success of the project, which reached a total of 1214 participants in 48 workshops over 12 months attracted attention from major network companies. The project was not refunded, and ECCV recommend this project be used as a template for specific funding to both the ESC and DSDBI to partner to establish a joint

community education team targeting culturally diverse energy consumers. It also support re-funding the EIF.

- 10.4. No ethno-specific energy organisations currently lead advocacy for culturally diverse energy consumers, however some Victorian not for profit organisations have developed ethno-specific energy education programs. ECCV support establishing grants to be made available to organisations with projects targeting culturally diverse energy consumers within a re-funded EIF or funds tied to both ESC and the DSDBI.

Recommendation 16

ECCV recommends funding to be allocated through the ESC to increase its own cultural competence to increase its capacity to identify culturally diverse energy consumer issues and their place within State retail energy regulation.

Recommendation 17

ECCV recommends funding to be allocated to the CLE sector, through increased funding to the ESC, to employ community legal educators in ‘train the trainer’ programs targeting retailers and culturally diverse energy consumers.

Recommendation 18

ECCV recommends funding to be allocated to both the ESC and DSDBI to partner to establish a joint community education team targeting culturally diverse energy consumers using ECCV’s MCEE Project as a template.

Recommendation 19

ECCV recommends funding to the EIF be allocated specifically in the 2016 Budget.

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