

ECCV policy analysis on Federal election commitments to Seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds June 2016

About ECCV

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the peak policy advocacy body for Victoria's ethnic and multicultural communities in Victoria with a membership of 220 organisations and eight regional Ethnic Communities' Councils (ECCs).

Background

As part of ECCV's policy advocacy on behalf of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds, ECCV wrote letters to the Greens, Australian Labor Party, and Liberal Party of Australia asking each party five questions in relation to their election commitment to seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds in Victoria. ECCV thanks the parties that were able to respond considering the short timeframe. This document compares party statements on culturally inclusive aged care, the age pension, digital literacy of seniors from multicultural backgrounds, and *My Aged Care*, a Commonwealth Government service portal for older people.

Victoria's culturally and linguistically diverse population

According to the 2011 Census, approximately 30 percent of Victorian seniors are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Seniors of the top 10 culturally diverse ageing groups in Victoria amount to almost 140,000 people. [Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia \(FECCA\) research](#) indicate that more than 600,000 older people from culturally linguistically diverse backgrounds live in Australia. A significant number of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds are aged pensioners. ECCV advocates for better access of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds to ethno-specific and culturally inclusive ageing services. For details, see [ECCV Multicultural Aged Care Strategy](#).

Key election issues and party statements

Culturally inclusive aged care

- A. The Australian Labor Party has committed to establishing a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Aged Care Fund that will provide funding towards new facilities, and upgrades and improvements to existing facilities that service ethnic communities throughout Australia. This will support aged care facilities which ensure older Australians from CALD backgrounds are in an environment where the language, food and surroundings are familiar (See Labor press release [here](#)).

- B. The Rural, Regional, and Other Special Needs Building Funds provides capital grants for the construction or upgrade of residential aged care buildings. Approximately \$11.5 million from the fund is been earmarked in each funding round to support access to residential aged care for older people from CALD backgrounds (See Coalition response to ECCV [here](#)).
- C. The Greens have stated that cultural diversity is an essential part of our society, so services to the community must reflect that. The Greens strongly support cultural diversity, and want to see all aspects of aged care, including the Commonwealth Home Support Programme, reflect and cater for the rich diversity of our community (See Greens response to ECCV [here](#)).

Age pension

- A. The Australian Labor party has pledged to stand up for pensioners and ensure Australia has a fair pension system that remains both adequate and sustainable. A Labor Government will scrap the Turnbull's Government plans to reduce the period of time pensioners can spend overseas and keep their full pension (See Labor election statement on pension system [here](#)).
- B. The Coalition provided a detailed response to ECCV. Please see [here](#).
- C. The Greens have consistently opposed unfair cuts to the age pension and changing the age of eligibility. The Greens will establish an independent Equality Commission to provide independent advice to the Government and Parliament on setting rates of income support including the age pension (See Greens response to ECCV [here](#)).

Digital literacy of seniors from multicultural backgrounds

- A. Labor has indicated to pursue a national information policy to ensure optimal data generation, protection, access and use (See Labor national information policy [here](#)).
- B. The Turnbull Coalition Government is committed to ensuring senior Australians have the digital skills and knowledge to take advantage of new technology and stay connected with loved ones online (See Coalition response to ECCV [here](#)).
- C. The Greens recognise that the increasing uptake of digital technology threatens to exclude seniors and especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds. It is important to the Greens that everyone has access to the benefits of digital technologies, which is why the Greens will instate a Digital Rights Commissioner to work out of the Australian Human Rights Commission (See Greens response to ECCV [here](#)).

My Aged Care portal

- A. A Labor government will address ongoing problems in the *My Aged Care* gateway in the first 100 days of Government, in consultation with the aged care sector, consumers and medical and allied health providers (See Labor press release [here](#)).
- B. A re-elected Turnbull Government will continue to consult on the ongoing development of *My Aged Care* including with the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria to ensure equitable

access for seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds (See Coalition letter to ECCV [here](#)).

- C. The Greens highlighted that better investment in government services infrastructure, such as the *My Aged Care* system, will facilitate better access to services for all seniors, and is especially important for those of non-English speaking backgrounds (See Greens response to ECCV [here](#)).

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For further information, contact ECCV Aged Care Policy Officer Nikolaus Rittinghausen on 03 9349 4122 and email nrittinghausen@eccv.org.au.