

# ECCV Pre-Budget 2018-19

## Submission to the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance

November 2017

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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.

This submission consists of recommendations to the Victorian Government for specific funding areas to address gaps in services for culturally diverse Victorians in nine key areas including: drug and alcohol prevention and treatment, employment, aged care, health, gender equality and family violence, youth, regional Victoria and community safety.

The recommendations in this paper are based on a community roundtable discussion, regional ECCV consultations and previous ECCV reports.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Drug or alcohol (DOA) prevention and treatment**

The toll from the alcohol or drug (AOD) abuse of a family member can affect an entire culturally diverse community already experiencing multiple barriers. The ECCV commend Victoria's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for its four-year funding to support frontline AOD workers and advocate to further identify new service delivery models accessible to culturally diverse Victorians. This is supported by feedback to ECCV that prevention and education programs are preferred over law enforcement strategies.

Feedback to ECCV indicates that ice has become a significant community problem and that prevention and treatment for ice addicts are not always culturally appropriate. Research conducted by the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association<sup>1</sup> (VAADA) support this. The report argues that a significant number of people from culturally diverse and multi-faith backgrounds entering the criminal justice system bypass AOD support services due to a lack of knowledge and trust. Resourcing culturally competent training for AOD practitioners and agencies to develop new services can change this imbalance.

At a 2016 Community Safety Summit in Sydney, DOA experts explained that ice users often move to ice from other, more expensive drugs. They also noted that community engagement with leaders was essential. ECCV recommend resourcing strategic partnerships between local ethnic and faith-based community groups and AOD practitioners to develop culturally competent, bilingual and bicultural ice prevention and treatment projects.

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<sup>1</sup> VAADA, *CALD AOD Project: Final report* (2016) Accessed 31-10-2017 at URL: <http://www.vaada.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CALD-AOD-Project-final-report.pdf>

**Recommendation 1**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government resource culturally responsive face-to-face ice training that is specifically targeted at multi-faith and ethnic community leaders.

**Recommendation 2**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government resource partnerships between local ethnic and faith-based community groups and AOD practitioners to develop culturally competent and bilingual and bicultural AOD ice prevention and treatment projects.

## 2. Aged Care

**Ethnic senior citizens clubs**

Ethnic and multicultural senior citizens' clubs and groups play a major role in the community. Through peer-to-peer assistance seniors clubs overcome social isolation to access healthy ageing programs and government services. This is particularly challenging with consistently low digital literacy rates, the transition of government services online and the lack of qualified interpreters for new and emerging seniors.

An example of a high-need issue for ethnic senior citizens clubs is the rules for incorporated association by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV). ECCV advocates for translations of government subsidised services and information into the most common community languages spoken by seniors. Additional allocation of funding for bilingual workers to deliver community education to seniors in the most isolated culturally diverse communities is an important step in building their capacity to understand aged care services.

Two examples of isolated culturally diverse communities with very low capacity to develop an infrastructure include the Afghan and South Sudanese communities. Many of their seniors are forming voluntary peer to peer support groups to educate themselves, often across traditional gender divisions, about accessing aged care services. Peer-based groups without any infrastructure require focused support to enable them to participate in education programs.

**Recommendation 3**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocate resources for a mobile apps and an intergenerational community hub to educate seniors from new and emerging communities on how to navigate aged care services.

**Recommendation 4**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocate resources for bilingual workers to deliver community education to seniors in 5 to 10 of the most isolated culturally diverse communities to transition peer to peer seniors groups towards sustainable infrastructures.

**Prevention of elder abuse**

Funded since 2012 until 2018, the ECCV elder abuse project has completed over 395 community information sessions and reached over 15,000 culturally and linguistically diverse seniors in Victoria. Its effectiveness is defined by a commitment to in-language services, advocating for multilingual workforce planning and awareness-raising. The funding of education is important to ensure that these community networks remain available for future elder abuse programs, aged care services and to ensure that culturally diverse seniors stay safe.

Without continued investment in Victorian ethnic community peak organisations, elder abuse in culturally diverse communities will remain hidden and stigmatised.

#### **Recommendation 5**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates resources to ethno-specific services to continue to deliver elder abuse prevention and bi-lingual community education.

#### **CALD Seniors Grants Program**

Since 2012 elder abuse outreach grants have reached over 15,000 culturally and linguistically diverse seniors in Victoria. It has been effective in helping seniors from culturally diverse backgrounds get involved and stay active in their communities through a wide range of activities including transport assistance, outings, English classes, fitness classes, and cultural celebrations with traditional dance and music. Continuing these grants will improve communication links for people at risk of isolation, such as teaching them how to use Facebook and set up social media groups. Even small grant amounts can make a significant difference to an isolated senior and ECCV recognise the value of small, targeted grants that can lead to the improvements in the wellbeing of isolated seniors.

#### **Recommendation 6**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government continue to deliver CALD seniors grants to overcome social isolation of culturally diverse seniors.

### **3. Families**

#### **Cross-cultural parenting**

ECCV and Deakin University's 2015 joint research<sup>2</sup> project highlighted issues associated with cross-cultural parenting in the context of intercultural and intergenerational relationships. Culture strongly influences a family's parenting styles. The report found that a lack of shared intergenerational and intercultural understanding of successful parenting practices is often focused on the discipline and punishment of children. In some cases this has led to the involvement of the police and child protection services and, at times, the separation of young people from their families and communities.

The report found that South Sudanese and Arabic-speaking young people who felt isolated from their family and community were at greater risk of homelessness, alcohol, drug abuse, crime, and radicalisation. Families want government agencies to understand the risks young people face without community support. The report also used the term 'acculturation gap' to describe migrant families trying to reconcile at least two different cultural models within their family unit. ECCV supports grants which recognise the inter-cultural and intergenerational aspects of parenting in a multicultural setting.

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<sup>2</sup> Fethi Mansouri, Danny Ben Moshe, Amelia Johns (2015), *Intergenerational Relations in Newly-Arrived Communities in Victoria: A Pilot Study Report*, Deakin University and ECCV. Accessed 31-10-2017 at URL: <[http://eccv.org.au/library/ECCV\\_Intergenerational\\_Report\\_Final4.11.15.pdf](http://eccv.org.au/library/ECCV_Intergenerational_Report_Final4.11.15.pdf)>

**Recommendation 7**

ECCV recommends the Victorian Government allocates resources for consultation and co-design of parenting support programs among multi-faith and ethnically diverse parents, schools and government services.

ECCV finds that negative media portrayals of ethnically and culturally diverse young people are potentially harmful to their mental health. Limited support or compensation for youth and families who are exonerated as suspects in criminal matters – but publically identified – can lead to community tensions. The flow-on effect of media stories are creating intergenerational tensions between parents and their school-aged children which are compounded by pressures within schools and the broader community. There is a need to attract hard to reach youth that are not typically attracted to youth leadership programs to enable them to create their own positive identity and media representations.

ECCV believes a positive parenting program to ‘ease off’ the pressure and high expectations placed on young people in some ethnic families would enhance social cohesion, harmony and participation. That in turn would increase the sense of belonging to Victoria and Australia of young people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

**Recommendation 8**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government’s Community Resilience Unit provide a series of grants to support an “Ease off” parenting program model involving community leaders and families.

**Financial literacy**

ECCV is concerned for culturally diverse people experiencing financial hardship due to low levels of access to financial literacy skills training<sup>3</sup>. Despite a gap in data on ethno-specific communities accessing hardship provisions for credit card, mortgage and utilities debts, community feedback to ECCV indicates that many culturally diverse consumers default on their debts and have a very high rate of fines from a lack of capacity to understand contracts and local infringement laws. ECCV advocates for training of frontline bilingual workers of ethno-specific and multicultural agencies in the area of financial counselling to help identify and upskill culturally diverse people experiencing financial hardship.

**Recommendation 9**

ECCV recommends that that the Victorian Government allocates resources to train bilingual staff of ethno-specific and multicultural agencies to become specialist financial counsellors to provide culturally responsive training in household budgeting.

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<sup>3</sup> ECCV ECCV Submission To The Victorian Essential Services Commission’s Supporting Customers, Avoiding Labels: Energy Hardship Inquiry Draft Report, September 2015. See also ECCV Social Cohesion Policy Brief 1, Intergenerational Relationships, 2015 at URL: <  
[http://eccv.org.au/library/file/document/2015\\_submissions/Final ECCV Submission Essential Services Commission Hardship Review 2015.pdf](http://eccv.org.au/library/file/document/2015_submissions/Final_ECCV_Submission_Essential_Services_Commission_Hardship_Review_2015.pdf)

## 4. Gender equality

ECCV's 2017 discussion paper *Gender Equality - What Matters To Multicultural Women*<sup>4</sup> builds on a range of activities conducted by ECCV including two major submissions for the Victorian Government's Royal Commission into Family Violence Report<sup>5</sup> and for the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy.

At a 2017 ECCV New and Emerging Communities Forum, Afghan women reflected on how family well-being and domestic violence often reflects a former life within single income patriarchal societies. Separating from that norm is a big transition requiring education on gender equality and rights in Australia. For both parties to understand gender equality, information sessions based on the Victorian Government's Equality Strategy are needed for the pre-arrival and settlement phases.

### **Recommendation 10**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government invest in programs for female community leaders to support cultural change which acknowledges the role of culturally diverse women and girls to co-design gender equality programs.

### **Recommendation 11**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government increase targeted initiatives to improve the responsiveness of service providers to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse women and girls.

### **Family violence & support**

The needs of culturally diverse children in family violence require more attention in the new family violence initiatives. The ECCV and Commission for Children and Youth (CCYP) co-chair the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Strategic Partnership Advisory Committee which includes decision-makers from key government departments and non-government agencies collaborating to identify strategic responses to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families from CALD and refugee backgrounds. It was discussed that a full time project/policy officer role with a focus on culturally diverse children and family violence within an ethno-specific or multicultural peak organisation could very effectively link the work of the CCYP, multicultural family violence services like inTouch and culturally diverse families.

### **Recommendation 12**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government provide family support for the regional ethnic councils to provide culturally sensitive information to prevent domestic and family violence in culturally diverse communities.

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<sup>4</sup> ECCV, *Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*, (2016) Accessed 31-10-2017 at URL: <[http://eccv.org.au/library/ECCV\\_Response\\_to\\_Vic\\_Govt\\_Consultation\\_Gender\\_Equality\\_Strategy\\_Oct\\_2016\\_FINAL.pdf](http://eccv.org.au/library/ECCV_Response_to_Vic_Govt_Consultation_Gender_Equality_Strategy_Oct_2016_FINAL.pdf)>

<sup>5</sup> *ECCV Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence* Accessed 05-10-2017 at URL: <[http://www.eccv.org.au/library/2015-06-02\\_SUB\\_RCFV\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.eccv.org.au/library/2015-06-02_SUB_RCFV_FINAL.pdf)>.

**Recommendation 13**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government resource a multicultural policy/project officer to support links between the CCYP, InTouch and culturally diverse families focusing on children and family violence.

## 5. Health Care

### Interpreting services in the Victorian health system

Health providers need training for culturally diverse Victorian health consumers and their families to know their rights to access: accredited interpreters, clear communication, safety, respect, privacy and confidentiality. They also have a right to give feedback and have their concerns addressed. ECCV's discussion paper *Our Stories Our Voices -Culturally diverse consumer perspectives on the role of accredited interpreters in Victoria's health services*<sup>6</sup> (March 2017) raises three significant issues on the barriers facing culturally diverse Victorians to accessing equitable health services.

The report's finds that:

- Many Victorian migrants, refugees and asylum seekers do not have the English language skills to understand what information is required by health professionals and to clearly communicate their needs.
- Health services which are frequently uninformed or unresponsive to the way culture impacts on health communication can impact on the quality of health care.
- Questions remain if interpreters have sufficient medical knowledge and qualifications to work in health settings.

To achieve culturally responsive, person-centred and consumer-directed services, and to ease the burden on the Victorian healthcare system, more resources are required for Victorian public health service providers to ensure culturally diverse consumers and their families and carers are aware of, and understand, how to access qualified interpreting services.

ECCV believes that an ethnic or multicultural peak organisation, in partnership with a major Victorian health service, would be well-placed to deliver on an interpreter awareness raising pilot for health consumers and providers.

**Recommendation 14**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government funds an awareness-raising campaign, promotional material and advertisements to promote the role and engagement of accredited interpreters in the Victorian healthcare system.

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<sup>6</sup> ECCV Discussion Paper: Our Stories, Our Voices: Culturally diverse consumer perspectives on the role of accredited interpreters in Victoria's health services Accessed 31-10-2017 at URL: [http://www.eccv.org.au/library/ECCV\\_Interpreters\\_discussion\\_paper\\_FINAL\\_March\\_2017\\_web\\_vs1.pdf](http://www.eccv.org.au/library/ECCV_Interpreters_discussion_paper_FINAL_March_2017_web_vs1.pdf).

## 6. Employment

### Specialised employment initiatives

ECCV believes that the loss of specialist providers for culturally diverse jobseekers under previous employment programs needs to be reversed<sup>7</sup>. As a result of this loss, in Victoria, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum continue to face barriers to gaining professional, paid employment in the labour market due to a lack of specialist employment services.

To secure meaningful and sustainable employment, culturally diverse jobseekers need improved access to innovative, localised and targeted employment programs<sup>8</sup>. The Victorian Government, as part of its responsibilities under Jobs Victoria and the Jobs Victoria Employment Network program (JVEN), is well placed to address employment service gaps and strengthen its employment support for multicultural Victorians. ECCV supports an increase in resources for JVEN to complement the existing system, including by funding local community organisations to provide flexible, tailored services to disadvantaged culturally diverse jobseekers.

In addition, ECCV believes that specialised migrant and refugee employment programs need to be rolled out to address the gaps left by mainstream employment providers. An example of such an initiative is the NSW Government's Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP)<sup>9</sup> that specifically addresses the challenges experienced by refugees in finding long term, skilled employment.

ECCV's gender equality consultations in outer Melbourne suburbs also identified female entrepreneurs in new and emerging communities determined to seek opportunities to become self-sustaining through business and legal compliance training.

#### **Recommendation 15**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government sustains and increases funding for the JVEN program to support localised community organisations and provide flexible tailored employment assistance to culturally diverse Victorian jobseekers.

#### **Recommendation 16**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government resource specialised migrant and refugees employment services in local areas with high migrant and refugee populations to fill the gaps left by mainstream employment services.

#### **Recommendation 17**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government resource small business training for female entrepreneurs in local areas with high migrant and refugee populations.

<sup>7</sup> See Refugee Council of Australia report by Shukufa Tahiri's, *Not Working: Experiences of refugees and migrants with Jobactive* (August 2017 - Report No 03/2017) Accessed 10-10-2017 at URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/australia/not-working-experiences-refugees-and-migrants-jobactive-august-2017-report-no>.

<sup>8</sup> Refugee Council of Australia (2010), *What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee Humanitarian Entrants*. Accessed 18-10-2017 at URL: < [https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/reports/What\\_Works.pdf](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/reports/What_Works.pdf)>.

<sup>9</sup> NSW Department of Industry, *Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP)*, [https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/programs\\_services/funded\\_other/resp/index.html](https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/programs_services/funded_other/resp/index.html).

### **Employment in areas of low economic activity**

ECCV underlines the significant rates of low economic activity in areas that have been dependent on car manufacturing. It includes areas with a high proportion of overseas born Victorians, such as Hume and Geelong. ECCV advocates for enhancing collaboration by Jobs Victoria in working with culturally diverse organisations to ensure their programs are culturally and linguistically responsive and are effectively applied in areas with a large proportion of culturally diverse Victorians.

#### **Recommendation 18**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates resources to *Jobs Victoria* to work closely with ethno-specific and multicultural community based organisations and social enterprises in areas such as Hume and Geelong to assist retrenched culturally diverse workers find new jobs through tailored, effective and culturally responsive support services.

## **7. Youth**

### **Young people and employment**

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<sup>10</sup>. Some young people who experience disrupted education before arrival may experience additional learning difficulties, such as being illiterate in their first language. Experiencing racism and discrimination at school adds further discouragement.

Young people and families from migrant and refugee backgrounds are often unfamiliar with the Australian education system. A lack of flexibility within the education system, limited pathways from education to employment and sector funding cuts may also serve to further discourage participation. Targeted programs that strengthen the link between school and work provide support at a time when a young person is most vulnerable to disengagement.

#### **Recommendation 19**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates resources for a sustainable funding model of training and employment pathways targeted at young people from culturally diverse background during the immediate periods between school and work.

### **Youth diversion strategies**

ECCV have previously advocated to the Department of Justice<sup>11</sup> on how disruptive the experience of migration and settlement can be for young people. Many young Victorians have spent periods of their lives in uncertain and dangerous surroundings, such as conflict zones and refugee camps. Trauma associated with witnessing or experiencing violence and losing loved ones, including parents, continues to affect them after settlement.

<sup>10</sup> ECCV *ECCV Work Solutions: Improving Cultural Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace, Full discussion paper* (2014) Accessed 31-10-2017 at URL: <[http://eccv.org.au/library/file/policy/Final\\_FULL\\_REPORT\\_ECCV\\_Work\\_Solutions\\_Discussion\\_Paper\\_Feb\\_2014.pdf](http://eccv.org.au/library/file/policy/Final_FULL_REPORT_ECCV_Work_Solutions_Discussion_Paper_Feb_2014.pdf)>.

<sup>11</sup> ECCV *ECCV Submission in response to the Department of Justice discussion paper: Practical Lessons, Fair Consequences: Improving Diversion for Young People in Victoria* (2012).

The ECCV highlights that young people from refugee and migrant communities would benefit from targeted and tailored interventions to recognise and overcome the additional challenges that face young people who have moved, or been compelled to leave their country of birth to come to Australia.

Feedback to ECCV indicate that pressing youth issues include: literacy issues, socioeconomic disadvantage, unfamiliarity with accessing support services, knowledge of their legal rights and responsibilities, culturally unresponsive support services, distrust of authorities from experiences in their country of origin, trauma recovery and a reduced network of support due to migration. Immediate settlement periods are the most demanding, such as the priority of finding and adjusting to new housing arrangements, work, school and communities. This may inadvertently result in contact with the police and the courts.

ECCV advocate for resources to enhance the cultural appropriateness of diversion programs and associated case management. Co-designed diversion programs can build trust. ECCV note the innovation of placing onsite lawyers in schools, such as with West Justice Community Legal Centre's program<sup>12</sup> in Melbourne's outer west.

#### **Recommendation 20**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates resources to enhance the cultural appropriateness of diversion programs and associated case management. This includes considerations to issues associated with culture, language, religion, and migration experiences when working and engaging with culturally diverse young people and their families.

#### **Recommendation 21**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates resources to pilot onsite youth legal and consumer educators in schools with high numbers of newly-arrived and refugee young people.

## **8. Regional Victoria**

To ensure successful regional settlement of migrants and refugees, ECCV highlights the importance of including culturally appropriate health literacy in Victorian regional settlement services. The eight regional Ethnic Communities' Councils (ECCs) in Victoria have repeatedly reported to the ECCV that increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers are settling in regional areas and the associated increase in demand on culturally appropriate settlement, health services and community engagement in regional Victoria is under strain.

#### **Recommendation 22**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates funding to the eight regional Ethnic Communities' Councils (ECCs) in Victoria to maintain their engagement with culturally diverse Victorians.

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<sup>12</sup> See the WEstjustice School Lawyer program at URL: <http://www.westjustice.org.au/community-development-and-law-reform> accessed 10/10/17.

**Recommendation 23**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates resources for a pilot project in regional Victoria through a regional ECCs to inform and educate culturally diverse people and build community capacity to access qualified interpreting services.

**Recommendation 24**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates resources for evidence-based research on the experiences of culturally diverse communities who use health and settlement services in regional Victoria.

## 9. Community Safety

**Cultural responsiveness of polices forces**

Victorian police forces deal with a variety of stakeholders, victims, and perpetrators such as in cases of family violence and violent behaviours and its prevention among younger people. Regional feedback to ECCV supports a need for dedicated Multicultural Liaison Officers and New and Emerging Community Liaison Officers within Victoria Police in regional areas. These roles can make a difference in increasing the cultural responsiveness of Victorian polices forces.

**Recommendation 25**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates resources to active and frontline units of Victoria Police to enhance culturally appropriate engagement of Protective Services Officers and frontline police officers particularly with newly-arrived communities in regional Victoria.

**Recommendation 26**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government recruits specialist multicultural family violence officers and specialist multicultural youth officers to assist Victoria Police to deal with sensitive issues relating to family and youth violence prevention in culturally diverse communities in regional Victoria.

**Cultural responsiveness of emergency services**

ECCV feedback<sup>13</sup> indicates that language and culture plays a crucial role in how effectively emergency personnel are able to assist the community during a emergency. As part of the Victorian Government Plan to employ 21 new safety and emergency response team staff positions, ECCV advocates for the creation of a multicultural position within the safety and emergency response team to focus on culturally diverse seniors and young people.

**Recommendation 27**

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government provide resourcing for a multicultural position as part of the Victorian Government Plan to employ 21 new safety and emergency response team staff positions.

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<sup>13</sup> ECCV ECCV Discussion Paper, 2011, *Refugees in Regional Victoria,- Implications for Regional Health Care Services*.

### **Reducing isolation with new technologies**

In a forthcoming ECCV report on the needs of new and emerging aging communities, the ECCV found that migrant communities are eager to engage with new technologies at all age levels. Some are experimenting with designing mobile 'apps' while exploring how their communities integrate mobile phone technology to build on their traditional cultural values.

#### **Recommendation 28**

That the Victorian Government provides resourcing for grants for partnerships between new and emerging communities and technology specialists for innovate projects that connect culturally diverse communities in outlying growth areas.

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