

ECCV Pre-Budget 2017-18 Submission to Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance

February 2017

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. As the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community, we consult directly with communities to assist the State Government to progress effective policies for multicultural Victoria.

This submission is 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.

The submission consists of recommendations in the following sections:

1. Peak NGO support
2. Employment and business:
3. Intergenerational families & community resilience

1. Peak NGO support

1.1. Community consultation facilities

The Victorian government has continually provided bipartisan accommodation support for the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) as the peak advocacy organisation for Victorian ethnic and multicultural organisations. In 2016 the Victorian Education Department required ECCV to vacate its premises in Carlton. The Victorian Government provided an additional \$55,000 to enable ECCV relocate its office space to Coburg however additional meeting room space is required for the peak body to conduct regular monthly community forums and consultations to adequately represent over 200 members and stakeholders and provide advice to the government. As an NGO, ECCV is important to the development of public policy as it:

- Is able to be responsive to community needs speedier than a government bureaucracy.
- Often conducts preventative programs saving significant public money in the long term.
- Focuses on people from culturally diverse backgrounds and their local neighbourhoods.
- Works in close partnership with health and legal professionals to deliver culturally responsive awareness-raising sessions to culturally diverse communities.
- Assists states and local government in community development, service delivery and community consultations targeted at 'hard-to-reach' culturally diverse community groups.
- Partners with universities on evidence based research such as the *Intergenerational relations in newly-arrived communities* (ECCCV/Deakin University 2016).

- Conducts extensive community consultations with new and emerging community groups in Victoria.

One of the challenges of a policy advocacy NGO such as ECCV following its recent relocation from Carlton to Coburg is to secure sufficient meeting room floor space to conduct community consultations in line with its core work plan approved by the Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Department of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC). Cost effective premises for community consultation and awareness raising sessions, workshops and forums are readily available in the new Coburg premises. Access to such rooms would result in a significant saving of hiring rental space for meetings in other venues.

Recommendation 1

That the Victoria Government resources ECCV to access on-site meeting rooms for culturally diverse community consultations and education sessions.

1.2. Regional settlement support

ECCV commended the Government in its 2016-17 Budget for allocating \$18 over four years for settlement and asylum seeker support. While we support the \$4.5M annual investment ECCV consultations indicate that the broad spread of these funds across Victoria may not always reach regional settlement communities.

Eight Ethnic Communities Councils in regional Victoria have reported to ECCV that increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers settling outside the metropolitan areas in Victoria is increasing the demand on culturally appropriate settlement services. Feedback to ECCV finds that the broader service system needs support to deliver culturally appropriate services to enable smoother transition from specialised settlement support services to mainstream services. Good settlement experience is a whole of service sector and community responsibility which requires adequate funding and acknowledgement. While state and federal negotiations will remain, regional ECCs currently maintain strong ties to local communities to provide enhanced access and support services to refugees and asylum seekers without additional funding.

Recommendation 2

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government adequately resources ethnic and multicultural in regional Victoria to provide enhanced access and support services to refugees and asylum seekers.

2. Employment and Business

Feedback to ECCV through forums and face-to-face consultations, our employment committee and ongoing policy research find that culturally diverse workers still face significant barriers. Firstly, culturally diverse jobseekers experience barriers to recruitment as well as poor safety and

employment conditions through the labour hire industry. Secondly, a policy gap exists across sectors in understanding the positive benefits of a culturally diverse workforce for innovation and small business. ECCV groups these issues into Employment and Business and hosts a Policy Advisory Committee on Employment, Entrepreneurship, Education, and Training (PACEEET) attended by ethno-specific organisations, community members and leaders and employment and business professionals.

2.1. Culturally diverse recruitment strategies

Evidence is growing that culturally diverse workplaces are more productive, innovative and even profitable. Making a business case for culturally diverse workplaces is important. Many Victorian businesses are still learning about the challenges and opportunities a culturally diverse workforce brings to them. They need to be supported to increase diversity in their workplace in ways that support their business. ECCV recommends funding effective awareness raising campaigns to promote cultural diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Listening to business about their concerns is key to building their cultural competence and willingness to change the culture of their workplace.

Programs for employers to recruit culturally diverse jobseekers, some with overseas qualifications, motivate jobseekers when they believe they have equal access to employment. ECCV welcomes the Government's Recruit Smarter Initiative to address unconscious bias in recruitment and the Human Rights Commission strategy *Leading for Change: A blueprint for cultural diversity and inclusive leadership* (2016). ECCV has previously advocated to recognise the benefits of cultural diversity in creativity, innovation and regional trade through research on community and trade languages education in Victoria.

Recommendation 3

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government incentivise cultural competence as a business skill among the wider business community to encourage active recruitment of culturally diverse jobseekers.

Recommendation 4

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government fund initiatives to enhance the career opportunities of employees from culturally diverse backgrounds at the higher management level in local government and State government positions.

2.2. Multicultural small business festival

Many Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds have established thriving small businesses in niche market areas such as in the food, café and clothing business areas. In 2015 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) noted that, while earning the lowest incomes, migrants granted permanent humanitarian visas are the most entrepreneurial when compared with all permanent

migrants in Australia¹. ECCV can benefit in celebrating the achievements of multicultural businesses and entrepreneurs in the state's annual small business festival or within the entrepreneurship and business start-up grants criteria offered through LaunchVic.

Recommendation 5

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) resource specific grants for annual Multicultural small business festivals or events within the current annual Small Business Festival of Victoria or, for example, as a stand-alone event in partnership with a leading interculturally strong small business local council such as Moreland City Council.

2.3. Entrepreneurial Start-ups

The current Victorian Government recently established LaunchVic as an independent entity with access to \$60 million over 4 years to support start-up entrepreneurs to develop and grow their businesses. Start-up businesses are a viable option for culturally diverse Victorians with intercultural skills, especially for entrepreneurial young migrants and refugees. ECCV is aware that there is insufficient investment in multicultural start-up businesses. While ECCV recognizes that diversity is included in LaunchVic grant criteria we recommend specifically mapping the culturally diverse start-up landscape to build an infrastructure that also supports culturally diverse entrepreneurs.

Recommendation 6

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government's LaunchVic allocate funds to map the culturally diverse start-up landscape in Victoria to build an infrastructure that supports intercultural entrepreneurs while promoting the state's diversity as a creativity and innovation resource.

3. Intergenerational Families & Community Resilience

3.2. Isolated Seniors

The Victorian Government allocated \$1.6M funding to the CALD Seniors Program for four years commencing in 2011/12. The Participation for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Seniors Grants program is a Victorian Government small grants program targeting social isolated culturally and linguistically diverse seniors. Since 2011, this grants program has been delivered in partnership with the ECCV. This grant program has attracted strong support from culturally and linguistically diverse community groups, ethno-specific organisations and local government. More than 250 community projects across the state have been funded helping over 3000 isolated CALD seniors to get involved and participate in the community.

¹ <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/humanitarian-migrants-are-the-most-entrepreneurial-but-have-the-worst-income-20150904-gjfcrm.html>

Many of the funded projects are run by ethno specific seniors clubs or organisations that have strong links and trust with their communities, which means both projects have a high level of engagement and success and supports smaller organisations that may be disadvantaged competing for other grant programs. Ceasing this program would significantly disadvantage many seniors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, negatively impacting on social participation opportunities and health and wellbeing outcomes. Currently the demand for this program is over threefold to the available funding with ECCV supporting only one third of the number of applicants demonstrating that the high need for this program.

Recommendation 7

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government at the minimum renew investment in the Participation for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Seniors Grants program but consider expanding the funding to meet the actual demand from vulnerable culturally diverse seniors experiencing extreme isolation.

3.2. Multicultural specific drug and alcohol prevention and treatment

- Multicultural face-to-face ice training

ECCV is aware that the Victorian Department of Health (DHHS) called for tender submissions for face-to-face training for front-line alcohol and other drugs (AOD) workers in October 2016. The aim of the training is to enhance the capacity of front-line workers to deliver safe and effective services to people affected by ice over a four year period. ECCV notes that DHHS has allocated \$5.5M to support frontline workers who may have contact with people who are affected by ice in the health and human services, justice and education sectors over four years.

Research on the CALD AOD Project conducted by the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA, March 2016) indicates a significant number of people from culturally diverse and multi-faith backgrounds tend to enter the criminal justice system and bypass the AOD support services due to lack of knowledge and lack of trust. The report recommends cultural competence training and resources for AOD practitioners and for agencies to be supported to develop culturally appropriate service delivery models in partnership with local culturally diverse communities.

ECCV advocates for the Victorian Government to allocate funding over four years for culturally responsive face-to-face ice training for AOD services providers as well as for multi-faith and ethnic community leaders as they tend to have low competency in the impact and treatment of alcohol and other drugs (AOD) on individuals and families in their respective communities.

A specific assessment by ECCV to effectively deliver cultural competence AOD training would involve three regional Project Officers, possibly located in three of the eight Ethnic Communities Councils in regional Victoria and one central Project Officer located in a metropolitan venue to coordinate the program.

Speakers at the October 2016 3rd Annual National Community Safety Summit in Sydney reinforced the need for innovative strategies for enhancing social cohesion via community engagement. They identified that community leaders need to be involved in the solutions around AOD. ECCV feedback

indicates that bilingual, bicultural awareness raising sessions for smaller ethnic and faith-based community groups are most effective in the multicultural setting. Prevention and education programs were preferred over law enforcement. ECCV consultation with VAADA find that there is a need for specific culturally diverse funding at both the local community end and at the specialist service delivery end to close the gap to understanding the diverse communities affected by Ice.

Recommendation 8

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 9

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government fund a Multicultural AOD Policy/Project Officer at ECCV or a relevant peak organisation to ensure that programs are aligned with community experiences and are culturally competent.

3.3. Focus on families and de-radicalisation

(Social cohesion and community resilience grants)

In 2015-16 the Victorian Government allocated \$75M to a series of social cohesion initiatives which are proceeding to reflect the ongoing restructure of the former Office of Multiculturalism and Citizenship into the new Multicultural and Social Cohesion Division (MASC). Within this restructure, the Community Resilience Unit (CRU) continues to offer grants targeted towards social cohesion.

Since 2015, ECCV have held eight community roundtable consultations around social cohesion issues with members of multi-faith groups, new and emerging communities, teachers, parents, youth and community leaders. Our consultations indicate that parental pressures on young people sometime lead them to indirectly seek parental approval through excessive religious affiliation and subsequent radicalisation.

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.

ECCV also found that negative media portrayals of ethnically and culturally diverse young people was potentially harmful to their mental health and there is limited support or compensation for youth and families publically identified as suspects in criminal matters but who are later exonerated. The flow on effect of media stories is 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.

Recommendation 10

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.

Recommendation 11

ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government fund a Intercultural Arts Policy Officer at ECCV. The role would coordinate culturally diverse arts organisation working on intercultural understanding and attracting hard to reach youth to create positive identity and media representations.

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