



ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria

Response to

The Government's Vision for Citizenship in a Multicultural Victoria

October 2012

About the ECCV:

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the statewide peak advocacy body representing ethno-specific agencies and multicultural organisations. For more than 35 years ECCV has remained the principal liaison point between culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, government and the wider community in Victoria. The ECCV has over 210 members, representing groups with an ethnic or multicultural focus, organisations with an interest in these areas, or individuals who support ECCV. The majority of our members are not-for-profit community service organisations. The ECCV advocates and lobbies all levels of government in areas such as human rights, access and equity, racism, discrimination, employment, education, health and justice. We advocate on any issue that is of concern to our members. The ECCV has been a key player in building Victoria as a successful, harmonious and multicultural society.

The ECCV welcomes the Victorian Government's initiative to develop a new multicultural and citizenship policy and we appreciate the Government's broad community consultation on the initial policy vision document: *The Government's Vision for Citizenship in a Multicultural Victoria*.

Summary of Recommendations:

1. That in order to encourage Victorians to take up their rights and responsibilities, the Victorian Government resource site specific initiatives with a view to identifying and eliminating discrimination, racism and access barriers in a number of spaces, including workplaces, educational institutions, the labour market, the housing market and government supports and services.
2. That the Victorian Government consider the recommendations that have been made in the ECCV submission "Access and Equity- It's all about Relationships".
3. That the Victorian Government consider the recommendations that have been made by The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture with regard to the provision of credentialed interpreters.
4. That the Victorian Government take steps to ensure that funded agencies do not seek to accommodate budget cuts by reducing the provision of language services or credentialed interpreters.
5. That staff in Government departments and Government supported agencies be required to undertake cultural competence training and (for those in applicable positions) inclusive recruitment and management practice training.
6. That the Victorian Government initiate a public inquiry regarding the experiences and needs of CALD Victorians with regard to skills recognition and employment opportunities and experiences.
7. That the Victorian government use information gained through a public inquiry to develop a CALD specific employment strategy. This strategy should seek to address the additional employment barriers that face many refugees and people from CALD communities, including non-recognition of skills and qualifications, discrimination and the lack of locally based experiences and networks.
8. That the Victorian Government urge the Australian government to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, in order to demonstrate the State's commitment to protecting and respecting CALD workers.
9. That the Victorian Government initiate a public education campaign to highlight the significant social and economic value of immigration and multiculturalism. This needs to include information regarding the damaging effects of racism on our society and economy.
10. That the Victorian Government initiate a public education campaign that represents the unity that exists within our diversity by highlighting our shared Australian and human experiences.
11. That the Victorian Government enhance and expand public education and advertising campaigns that confront negative racial stereotypes.
12. That the Victorian Government enhance existing school-based programs and resource and develop new interventions, based on the guidelines identified by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.
13. That the Victorian Government provide enhanced resources and support to ethno-specific and multicultural community organisations, so that they can develop and provide community specific programs to encourage community members to report discrimination and to engender positive views towards multiculturalism within their client/membership base.
14. That the Victorian Government consider measures to hold media producers and broadcasters to better account for unfair reporting.

15. That the Victorian Government promote and support strong partnerships between multicultural groups and media organisations, allowing for collaboration on positive, representative messages and public education campaigns.
16. That a whole of government approach be taken to capturing and sharing data regarding service users.
17. That the Victorian Government agencies record the following client data, to assist with service planning and delivery:
 - Country of birth
 - Ancestry
 - Languages spoken
 - Preferred language
 - Self-ascribed ethnicity
 - Year of arrival in Australia
18. That the Victorian Government engage in in-depth consultations with local ethno-specific and multicultural organisations, as well as peak bodies, in order to develop a strategy for measuring the effectiveness of government policy and service delivery relating to the needs of diverse Victorians.
19. That the Victorian Government be proactive in ensuring that their workforce reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Victorian community
20. That the Victorian Government provide the resources required to undertake research regarding the current underrepresentation of CALD Victorians in the public service, with a view to identifying the measures that need to be taken to rectify this imbalance.

Responses to the questions posed by the Discussion Paper:

Q1: What do you see as the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in Victoria and how could all Victorians be encouraged to take up those rights and responsibilities?

The ECCV submits that every Victorian has the right to embrace and express their diversity, including their cultural and linguistic diversity, and to be proud of who they are and where they have come from. In order for this to occur, the ECCV submit that every Victorian has a responsibility to exercise their rights and responsibilities as a citizen of this country. They also need to listen to and to learn from, their fellow Victorians and to respect and embrace one another's differences.

The ECCV submits that many Victorians need support and awareness raising in order to realise and to take up these rights and responsibilities. Many Victorians will also need support to understand the benefits of multiculturalism more generally, as will be addressed in more detail with response to question four of this submission.

In order for people feel that they have the right to proudly express their cultural and linguistic diversity, they must be assured that it is safe to do so in the state of Victoria. This requires work to address and reduce racism in our communities. Some good moves have already been made in this regard, including the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's *Anti-Hate* awareness raising campaign and reporting mechanism. This is complimented by the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy. There are other such examples of good initiatives in this area, some of which will be discussed in this submission. While the ECCV welcomes these

programs and initiatives, we are also very aware that many people do not feel safe and welcome to express their culture and their diversity in Victoria.

Stakeholders have informed the ECCV that CALD community members experience discrimination and racism in a number of sites. Some sites of concern include:

- In public places
- In workplaces
- In schools and educational institutions
- When seeking housing
- When seeking employment
- When engaging with government services and supports
- When seeking health care and information
- During interactions with the Victoria Police.

In order for all Victorians to be able to enjoy their rights in our multicultural state, the above cannot be allowed to continue. The ECCV submit that site-specific approaches are needed to weed out and eliminate racism and discrimination, wherever it occurs, in order to protect the rights of our fellow Victorians.

Below is an example of good practice with regard to targeting site-specific discrimination in the area of housing.

Good practice example for encouraging Victorians to take up their rights and responsibilities.

Area of concern: Housing

In 2009 The Footscray Community Legal Centre (FCLC) developed the Refugee Tenancy and Housing Project in order to respond to a growing need for tenancy advocacy for the refugee communities of Melbourne's West.

The Project included the following elements.

- A legal tenancy clinic providing free legal advice and representation to people of refugee background living in the Western suburbs of Melbourne;
- Community education;
- Community development initiatives.

Through this process the FCLC observed that clients attending the clinic presented matters which raised serious concerns about the conduct of real estate agents, which included issues around trust account money, discrimination, eviction threats and illegal rent increases.¹ Clients also reported serious communication difficulties when dealing with real estate agents. It was noted that some problems were the result of mutual misunderstandings, or the client's lack of familiarity with Australian processes. It was also noted that, "[a]t times, the misunderstandings appeared to arise from opportunism or a degree of dishonesty on the part of the real estate agent".² In addition to this, none of the clinic's clients reported having a credentialed interpreter present when communicating with their real estate agent. This is despite the fact that selected real estate agencies have access to free telephone interpreting services and that the number of agencies with such access has recently been expanded. Real estate agents often used expressions such as "those people" to differentiate refugee tenants from "normal" tenants and to reference prior negative experiences with tenants of shared ethnic or cultural backgrounds.³ Real estate agents (who managed some 75 per cent of the FCLC's client's properties) also frequently expressed views that refugee clients were prone to defaulting on payments, were dirty and likely to damage properties and tended to have family members living with them, without their landlord's consent.⁴

¹ Berta, L., (2012), *Making it Home: Refugee Housing in Melbourne's West*, Footscray Community Legal Centre Inc., Melbourne: 11

² Op.cit:58

³ Op.cit: 56

⁴ ibid

In a report about the tenancy and housing issues that were encountered, the following key findings were among those identified by FCLC:

1. Refugees face significant disadvantages at VCAT
2. Bond claims made by landlords lack merit and display elements of opportunism
3. Landlords and agents ignore repeated requests for repairs
4. Weak eviction laws permit unfair evictions
5. Particular real estate agents act dishonestly, unlawfully and unethically
6. The Director of Housing often fails to meet its obligation to maintain properties in good repair, and meet model litigant obligations
7. Refugees are vulnerable targets for home ownership scams

The refugee tenancy clinic provided 241 advices and opened 88 files on behalf of clients during the first 18 months of the project. Due to the success of this project in assisting and advocating for those who are discriminated against and exploited in the private rental and housing market, this project has just received funding (from Consumer Affairs Victoria) for an additional three years. The three year funding is to provide tenancy services to vulnerable and disadvantaged tenants more broadly (i.e. not just refugee background tenants, though this target group continues to be a principal focus).

Further examples of site-specific responses to discrimination are provided with response to questions three and four of this submission, particularly with regard to schools and workplaces, which have been identified as areas of concern for many CALD Victorians.

In addition to site-specific responses, the ECCV submit that more general public education campaigns are required in order to highlight the fact that every Victorian has the right to be treated with respect and to live free from racism. This is discussed in more detail with relation to question four of this submission.

The ECCV recommend:

1. That in order to encourage Victorians to take up their rights and responsibilities, the Victorian Government resource site specific initiatives with a view to identifying and eliminating discrimination, racism and access barriers in a number of spaces, including workplaces, educational institutions, the labour market, the housing market and government supports and services

Q2: How can the Government improve access to services for our diverse communities?

In response to this question, the ECCV refer the Victorian government to our submission “Access and Equity- It’s all about Relationships” (attached). This submission was recently lodged with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and provides several recommendations for improving access to government services for diverse communities. Although this submission is targeted at federal policy in this area, the ECCV submit that the recommendations made can (and should) be adapted to the Victorian context.

The ECCV wish to also highlight the importance of the issues that are raised in the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture’s response to the *Government’s Vision for Citizenship in a Multicultural Victoria* (attached).

This submission highlights the importance of ensuring ready access to credentialed interpreters and highest-quality language services for CALD Victorians.

The ECCV are very concerned about the impact that recent departmental budget cuts may have on the ability of funded agencies to provide credentialed interpreters as required. According to sector feedback, many service providers still consider the provision of language services to be a discretionary cost and, as such, these services are often seen as an easy target when resources are strained. Targeting language services in an attempt to cut costs disproportionately affects CALD Victorians, which makes the impact discriminatory. Such actions also undermine the principles of access and equity and place service providers at risk of contravening the Racial Discrimination Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Equal Opportunity Act. These Acts require inter alia that:

- Department programs and funded services provide equitable access to services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including people with disabilities;
- Agencies must not directly or indirectly discriminate against people on the basis that they do not speak English well or at all, or that they use a form of sign language.

It is important to note that service provision and accessibility relies on more than language services and can often be affected by poor cross-cultural skills and inappropriate approaches. The ECCV submit that the accessibility of government services would be greatly improved if staff in Government departments and Government supported agencies were required to undertake cultural competence training and (for those in applicable positions) inclusive recruitment and management practice training.

The ECCV recommend:

2. That the Victorian government consider the recommendations that have been made in the ECCV submission "Access and Equity- It's all about Relationships".
3. That the Victorian Government considers the recommendations that have been made by The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture with regard to the provision of credentialed interpreters.
4. That the Victorian Government take steps to ensure that funded agencies do not seek to accommodate budget cuts by reducing the provision of language services or credentialed interpreters.
5. That staff in Government departments and Government supported agencies be required to undertake cultural competence training and (for those in applicable positions) inclusive recruitment and management practice training.

Q3: How can the Government best harness the skills, abilities and experiences of our diverse communities for the benefit of all Victorians?

As is noted in the Government's Discussion Paper, 46.8% of Victorians were either born overseas themselves or have at least one parent who was. People have come from all corners of the globe to make Victoria their home

and they have brought with them a wealth of diverse skills, qualifications and experiences, which offer great benefits to our community.

Unfortunately, people from CALD backgrounds continue to experience unemployment and underemployment at disproportionate levels. Often, this is because their skills and qualifications are not recognised in Australia.⁵ This lack of recognition does not appear to be evenly spread. It has been found that OECD-origin degree-qualified migrants achieve good representation in their own or other professions within the first five years of migration, yet starkly different outcomes are evident for migrants from other birthplace groups. Of particular concern to the ECCV is the fact that degree-qualified individuals who have come to Australia as refugees are disproportionately affected by lack of skill recognition and, as a result, are much more likely than other cohorts to be unemployed in the first five years of settlement.⁶ It has been observed that “migrants qualified in marginally known systems are at disproportionate risk of rejection, while subject to higher levels of unemployment and skills discounting despite it being unclear whether it is the immigrants racial origin, gender or post-secondary degree that is being undervalued”.⁷

Poor employment outcomes in destination countries damages the wellbeing and financial capacity of migrants, who often suffer low morale and hopelessness due to lack of skill recognition, it also produces an indefensible level of skill wastage, which is a negative outcome for all Victorians.⁸

According to sector feedback, in order to demonstrate and develop their skills, many CALD Victorians require enhanced opportunities and support. Stakeholder consultation on this matter has revealed that many newly arrived migrants are frustrated and disheartened by the regular requirement for local experience in their chosen field. It is clear that this can easily become a *catch-22* situation for CALD applicants, who cannot secure work without having local experience, but can also not secure local experience without being given the opportunity to work locally. Many more recently arrived migrants and Victorians of refugee background have reduced networks due to their relocation; this too can hinder ones chances at getting a foot-in-the door regarding employment. The ECCV submit that incentives should be offered to employers who support refugee and migrant Victorians by offering them employment.

ECCV members and stakeholders have reported that many CALD Victorians, particularly those from more recently arrived cohorts, require enhanced assistance and support when navigating the Australian job market and recruitment processes. This includes assistance with resume preparation, job applications, interview skills and the provision of accessible information regarding workplace rights.

Given the growing concern among our membership regarding employment issues in CALD communities, the ECCV Executive recently convened a Workforce Participation Policy Subcommittee. Some of the concerns and anecdotes expressed to the ECCV include:

- CALD individuals receiving better responses to job applications after anglicising their names. In one case known to the ECCV, one young man of African background submitted identical applications for a government position. On the first application he used his real name and he received a very quick rejection notice. On the second application he anglicised his name and was short listed and interviewed for the position.

⁵ Refugee Council of Australia, February 2010, *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11: Community Views on Current Challenges and Future Directions*, pp. 61

⁶ Hawthorne, L., 2008, Migrant Education: Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition of Qualifications, Summary of Expert Group Meeting (Nine Country Audit), prepared for UNESCO Expert Group Meeting on Migration and Education: Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition of Qualifications, 22-23 September 2008, Paris: 5

⁷ Owen, T & Lowe, S J (2008), 'Labour Market Integration of Skilled Immigrants: Good Practices for the Recognition of International Credentials – Canada', World Education Services-Canada, www.wes.org/ca, as cited in, Hawthorne, L., 2008: 6

⁸ Hawthorne, L., 2008, 8

- Cases of CALD workers being passed over for promotions and other opportunities in the workplace, despite equal (and at times superior) qualifications and time with employer.
- Experiences of workplace bullying that are specifically related to culture, religion and ethnicity. Those experiencing this type of racist harassment report that they are unsure how, or where to report incidents and fear losing their jobs, or angering their co-workers or employer by complaining.
- Increasing concern over the lack of diversity in the public sector, at all levels (for more information, see the Other Pertinent Issues section at the conclusion of this submission).
- The exploitation and degradation that CALD workers are vulnerable to in Victoria, due to the fact the Federal Government has not ratified the *International Convention on the Protection of Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*

In light of the above, the ECCV submit that the State of Victoria could be doing more to maximise the benefits of our diversely skilled population, in order to enhance social and economic conditions for all Victorians. It is important that we seek to better understand the factors that inhibit employment and skill recognition among certain CALD populations and that we develop a strategy to address these issues.

The ECCV recommend:

6. That the Victorian Government initiate a public inquiry regarding the experiences and needs of CALD Victorians with regard to skills recognition and employment opportunities and experiences.
7. That the Victorian government use information gained through a public inquiry to develop a CALD specific employment strategy. This strategy should seek to address the additional employment barriers that face many refugees and people from CALD communities, including non-recognition of skills and qualifications, discrimination and the lack of locally based experiences and networks.
8. That the Victorian Government urge the Australian government to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, in order to demonstrate the State's commitment to protecting and respecting CALD workers.

Q4: How can the Government support all Victorians to appreciate the benefits of our diverse society?

The ECCV acknowledges that multiculturalism, introduced as Australian Government policy in 1972, is not always well understood and has been perceived differently by different groups in society. We feel that it would be a mistake to assume that assimilationist values have been completely abandoned by all Victorians. There is much evidence to suggest that a substantial part of the Australian citizenry are still inclined towards assimilationist views and do not wholeheartedly accept the value of multiculturalism.⁹ While public opinion surveys show overwhelming support for multiculturalism, this support drops substantially when asked about

⁹ Dunn, K. & Forrest J., (2010), 'Attitudes to Multicultural Values in Diverse Spaces in Australia's Immigrant Cities: Sydney and Melbourne', *Space and Polity*, Routledge, Vol. 14, No. 1,; 82

migrants keeping their cultural identity.¹⁰ This is something that will need to be tackled if we are to see widespread and genuine appreciation of multiculturalism in Victoria.

It is well noted that intergroup tension is “socially disruptive, destabilises good community relations, social cohesion, and national unity...and decreases productivity”.¹¹ As such, all Victorians stand to benefit from harmonious relationships and enhanced cross cultural interaction and understanding. However, many Victorians will need support in order to recognise this. It is therefore vital that the information provided and promoted by the Victorian Government emphasises the wide-ranging destructiveness of racism and the benefits of social harmony and diversity

It needs to be acknowledged that attempts to reduce prejudice and racism are likely to encounter resistance if sections of the community believe that they stand to lose something due to multiculturalism.¹² For example, it has been observed that political support for anti-multicultural parties in Australia tends to be greatest in areas of socioeconomic hardship, where residents feel an acute sense of conflict for scarce urban resources (housing, jobs, social welfare and charity).¹³ The ECCV submit that a public education campaign is required in order to emphasise the wide-ranging destructiveness of racism (and the ways in which this affects the entire community) and the benefits of social harmony and diversity (including the economic benefits). This may go some way in assuaging the resource related fears that often drive anti-multicultural attitudes and will encourage Victorians to better appreciate the benefits of our diversity.

It is also important that the Victorian Government seek to eliminate false beliefs by providing accurate information.¹⁴ De-bunking myths and delegitimising stereotypes that have formed around certain groups is essential in order to enhance understanding, unity and empathy between groups. The *See Beyond Race* community awareness campaign that is part of the Locations Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) program in Victoria has demonstrated this principle at work. This campaign has shown that educational advertising can be a very powerful medium for getting accurate and positive messages across and shifting community views.

Public education campaigns should also aim to have Australians, of all walks of life, question the way they view themselves and how they would like to be viewed by others. Information about Australia’s strong history of acting as a safe-haven and good home to millions of immigrants may work to develop pride around inclusive values. Personal stories of immigrant families and their subsequent generations may be particularly effective for this purpose, as would stories of the many neighbours and community leaders who helped people to make Australia their home. Advertising and information that highlights the fair, just and progressive nature of Australia and equates being a ‘real Australian’ with these qualities, rather than with one’s ethnic heritage, could also be very powerful.

From a human rights perspective, it is important that, while highlighting the benefits of Victoria’s cultural diversity, the Government also highlight cross-cultural similarities. While information that highlights similarities must veer away from assimilationist discourses that celebrate sameness, Victorians could be made better aware of the fact that, despite our differences, we have shared experiences, concerns and joys. There is a sense of connection to be found in the fact that we are all Australians/Victorians and that we are all party to the human experience,

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ Allbrook M. R., (2001), *Strategies for Change: Anti-racism Initiatives from Australia, Canada, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom. Perth, Western Australia: The Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests: 11*, as cited in, Pedersen A., Walker I., Rapley M., Wise M., (2003): 7

¹² Pedersen A., Walker I., Rapley M., Wise M., (2003), *Anti-Racism - What Works? An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Anti-Racism Strategies*, Centre for Social Change & Social Equity, Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia:7

¹³ Davis R., Stimson R., (1998), ‘Disillusionment and Disenchantment at the Fringe: Explaining the Geography of the One Nation Party Vote at the Queensland Election’, *People and Place*, 6, pp. 69–82., as cited in Dunn, K. & Forrest J., (2010): 84

¹⁴ Op.Cit: 4

along with all the happiness and sadness that this can bring. Emphasising the commonalities that exist within our diversity can be a valuable aid in building empathy and a sense of joint purpose.

If we hope to see a Victoria in which diversity is truly valued, we need to ensure that action is taken whenever it is undervalued via discrimination and racism. Victorians need to be encouraged and supported to speak out when they experience or witness racism or discrimination. Those who may find themselves targeted must be given information relating to racism and identifying its multiple forms. They must also have ready access to information and support around speaking up and reporting racism and discrimination. The ECCV submit that those who experience racism at the personal level will be more willing to name and address it in an environment where racism is considered unequivocally abhorrent at the public level. As such, it is essential that all political and community leaders clearly and consistently denounce racism and work against it with their words, their policies and their actions.

The ECCV submit that, if adequately resourced, local ethno-specific and multicultural community organisations would be ideal sites for education and consciousness raising around issues of racism and avenues for redress. Such organisations are already well trusted sources of information and support; they have strong community connections and are considered to be safe-spaces for work on sensitive issues such as racism and discrimination.

Ethno-specific and multicultural community organisations can also assist in building support for multiculturalism within certain CALD communities. Research indicates that longer established migrant groups often respond with some disdain towards more recent arrivals from their own origin countries. It has been observed that, in many instances, “[t]he awkwardness and difficulties of the new immigrants are [considered] an embarrassment to the longer established cohorts”.¹⁵

It has also been revealed, via research and surveys, that people from migrant backgrounds may also harbour negative views of refugee communities. For example, one respondent to a recent survey made the following comment regarding refugees:

*“As a migrant some 50 years ago having paid for everything i.e. trip and no handouts [sic]. Sent to the country we did not have the easy side of what is now offered. We had to work and fight to get where we are. Including learning new language and culture”.*¹⁶

It would appear that views such as this, which indicate that refugees today have it ‘easier’ than other migrant groups, are not uncommon. Local ethno-specific and multicultural organisations should be considered essential sites for addressing these attitudes.

The earlier people learn about the value and benefits of multiculturalism, the more likely we are to see negative attitudes and misperceptions fall by the wayside as time passes. Schools are central to this task, as they exert great influence on students and the surrounding community. School is also the place where many young people experience, witness and participate in racist acts and speech.¹⁷ This does not bode well for emerging views regarding diversity.

In a recent review of strategies and resources to address race-based discrimination and support diversity in schools, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) put forward the following guiding principles for

¹⁵ *ibid*: 4

¹⁶ Attwell, J., Heveli, D., and Pedersen, A. (under review). *Let them stay or send them away? Predictors of negative attitudes toward refugees*, as cited in, Pedersen A., Walker I., Rapley M., Wise M., (2003): 12

¹⁷ Mansouri et al. (2009), *The Impact of Racism Upon the Health and Wellbeing of Young Australians*, Foundation for Young Australians, Melbourne:7, as cited in, Centre for Multicultural Youth, (June 2010), *Resources for Responding to Racism in Schools: Information Sheet*, Available: <http://www.cmy.net.au/Assets/1445/2/ResourcesforRespondingtoRacisminSchools.pdf> Accessed: 08/05/2012, see also, Refugee Health Research Centre, (2007), *Good Starts for Refugee Youth: Experience of discrimination among refugee youth in Melbourne*, Broadsheet # 4, November, viewed 2 May 2010 at www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc/documents/broadsheet-4.pdf, as cited in, *ibid*

future efforts to reduce racism and support diversity in Australian schools.¹⁸ These guiding principles advise that school-based programs be:

- multi-level
- multi-strategy
- integrated and long-term
- based on sound psychological, sociological and/or educational theory
- matched to the social-cognitive skills of participants
- appropriate for the ethno-racial composition of the school
- include adequate teacher training.

The ECCV support these guiding principles and would like to highlight the importance of the multi-level, whole-of-school approach advocated in VicHealth's review.

A whole-of-school approach is most likely to be effective in countering racist attitudes and supporting diversity. As suggested by VicHealth this should include action across the following levels¹⁹:

- school policies and guidelines
- curriculum and pedagogy
- training and development
- student support and development
- parent and community involvement
- monitoring and reporting of student performance and race-based discrimination

Once again, interventions and on-going programs will be more effective if they take into account and respond to the particular issues, groupings and concerns of those who make up the school and the school community. One-size-fits-all approaches are not appropriate and will be less likely to gain interest and yield results.

The media also has a role to play in reducing prejudice and promoting better understanding. It has been observed that the media has an "almost-structural effect"²⁰ on public opinions and perceptions. In addition to this, it has also been pointed out that "media analyses have consistently shown that ethnic minorities are routinely misrepresented and under-represented in mainstream media".²¹ This does very little to promote better understanding, or highlight the benefits of multiculturalism. The ECCV submit that media producers should be called upon to adequately represent Australia's diversity, both in personnel and programming. Claims of racism and defamation by the media should always be thoroughly investigated. Media producers and personalities should be held to greater account if they are found to have misrepresented or defamed any ethnic group. Media organisations can also be promoting multiculturalism via the production and broadcasting of public education media campaigns.

¹⁸ Greco T, Priest N, & Paradies Y (2010): *Review of Strategies and Resources to Address Race-Based Discrimination and Support Diversity in Schools*. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), Carlton, Australia:14

¹⁹ Op.cit: 19

²⁰ Dunn, K. & Forrest J., (2010): 99-100

²¹ Dunn K. M. & Nelson J.K., (2011), 'Challenging the Public Denial of Racism for a Deeper Multiculturalism', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 32:6, 587-602: 588

The ECCV recommend:

9. That the Victorian Government initiate a public education campaign to highlight the significant social and economic value of immigration and multiculturalism. This needs to include information regarding the damaging effects of racism on our society and economy.
10. That the Victorian Government initiate a public education campaign that represents the unity that exists within our diversity by highlighting our shared Australian and human experiences.
11. That the Victorian Government enhance and expand public education and advertising campaigns that confront negative racial stereotypes.
12. That the Victorian Government enhance existing school-based programs and resource and develop new interventions, based on the guidelines identified by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.
13. That the Victorian Government provide enhanced resources and support to ethno-specific and multicultural community organisations, so they can develop and provide community specific programs to encourage community members to report discrimination and to engender positive views towards multiculturalism within their client/membership base.
14. That the Victorian Government consider measures to hold media producers and broadcasters to better account for unfair reporting.
15. That Victorian Government promote and support strong partnerships between multicultural groups and media organisations, allowing for collaboration on positive, representative messages and public education campaigns

Q5: What existing programs do you think are the most important in supporting and promoting diversity in Victoria? How can these and other programs be improved?

The ECCV submit that the following programs provide models of best practice, in terms of supporting and promoting diversity in Victoria.

LOCATIONS EMBRACING AND ACCEPTING DIVERSITY (LEAD):

The LEAD program is currently being piloted in the City of Greater Shepparton and the City of Whittlesea. VicHealth has undertaken this program, with support from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Municipal Association of Victoria. The LEAD program is based on the findings of VicHealth

research, which indicates that coordinated actions, tailored to a specific locality, yield the best results with regard to increasing support for diversity and decreasing prejudice and discrimination.²²

The participating councils are engaging local workplaces, retailers, sporting clubs, and schools with a view to strengthen policies and cultures to minimise unfair treatment and ensure that cultural diversity is valued.²³ It is predicted that this sustained and concentrated approach will be able to bring about long term cultural change in these localities.

The LEAD program is supported by the *See Beyond Race* community awareness campaign, discussed earlier in this submission.

The Lead program is currently being evaluated, but anecdotal and sector feedback already indicates that the initiative has had a very positive effect in the participating communities.

THE DAREBIN ANTI-RACISM STRATEGY 2012-2015:

In 2011 the Darebin City Council were concerned by the outcomes of national research project which indicated that levels of racism in some northern suburbs of Melbourne (including Darebin) were higher than the state average. The Darebin City Council responded by launching a localised Racism Inquiry. Over 500 citizens took part in this consultative process and contributed their views and experiences to the Inquiry.

The findings of the Inquiry have fed into the development of the the Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy 2012-2015²⁴. The goals of the strategy are as follows:

- To build an inclusive and reflective organisation within Council
- To build equitable and inclusive services and programs
- To contribute to an inclusive and empowered Darebin community

The overarching vision of the Strategy is as follows:

*We will work towards becoming a municipality free of racism, where our community's diversity is valued, celebrated, embraced and leveraged.*²⁵

Implementation of the strategy has now commenced and sector feedback indicates that the process of the Inquiry, the obvious commitment of the Council and the launch of this positive Strategy has provided an empowering and, in some respects, a healing experience for many in Darebin.

WE ARE ONE PROJECT – VICTORIAN ARABIC SOCIAL SERVICES (VASS):

This project ran at VASS between November 2009 and November 2011. The project aimed to

²² The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), Victorian Locations Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD): <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/LEAD> ; Accessed 12/10/12

²³ ibid

²⁴ City of Darebin, *Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy 2012 – 2015*, Available: http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Files/Item_8.4_Appendix_A_-_Darebin_Anti-Racism_Strategy_2012-2015.pdf ; Accessed: 04/10/12

²⁵ Op.cit: 6

"[A]ddress the negative contributions of disempowerment, anger, helplessness and frustration within the Muslim Arabic Speaking Background (ASB) communities within schools in the Northern and Western Regions of Melbourne and within the broader community".²⁶

The project also sought to "bridge the cultural divide between new and established migrant communities and the broader Australian community".²⁷ In order to do this the project worked to "enhance community capacity building using workshops, mentoring activities, youth forums and school-community partnerships".²⁸ Seven local secondary schools participated in the program. The range of activities and outcomes achieved via the project are too numerous to be given due recognition here, though a list and more information can be found on the VASS website.²⁹ The project has produced some highly innovative and effective best practice models and was reviewed internally by VASS and externally through an independent agency.³⁰

ANTI-RACISM ACTION BAND (A.R.A.B) - VASS

A.R.A.B was originally developed by VASS as a creative outlet for Arabic young people who were experiencing racial vilification following the events of September 11, 2001.³¹ As time went on, it became clear to VASS and A.R.A.B members that that "racism, gang culture and discrimination against and between young people in the region was also fuelled by low self-esteem and a lack of creative outlets across all cultural groupings"³². As such, A.R.A.B opened its membership to all young people. A.R.A.B currently works with 250 young people from 50 different cultural groups and is described as "a large multi- disciplinary program that works actively to raise self-esteem and confidence, challenge racial tensions and promote social inclusion whilst imparting performance, event management, social and life skills and crucial employment pathways".³³

Q6: How can we more effectively measure the effectiveness of government policy and service delivery relating to the needs of diverse Victorians?

It is difficult to address community needs, or plan for effective policy and service delivery without strong and detailed data. Sector feedback on this question has indicated that there are gaps and deficiencies in the data that is collected and available for analysis in Victoria. In 2011 the Commonwealth Government made a commitment to:

*Work with state and territory government under the Council of Australian Governments to ensure that data collected by government agencies on client services can be disaggregated by markers of cultural diversity, such as country-of-birth, ancestry, languages spoken at home and level of English proficiency.*³⁴

The ECCV submit a whole-of-government approach should be taken to capturing and sharing data and that, in addition to the items listed above, the following data should be collected by Victorian Government agencies, in order to assist with service planning and delivery:

²⁶ Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS), *We Are One: Encouraging Peace Building in Schools*. Retrieved from the VASS website, available at: <http://www.vass.org.au/programmes-and-services/youth-services/we-are-one-project/> . Accessed: 07/05/2012

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ Taken from the Victorian Arabic Social Services' Anti-Racism Action Band (A.R.A.B) website, available at: <http://arab-vass.com/> , Accessed: 07/05/2012

³² *ibid*

³³ *ibid*

³⁴ The Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, *The People of Australia; Australia's Multicultural Policy*: 8

- Language preference (as distinct from languages spoken)
- Self-ascribed ethnicity (as distinct from country of origin)
- Year of arrival in Australia

The Victorian Government should act to monitor, evaluate and improve standards of access and equity. This will help to ensure that Victorians from diverse backgrounds are not discriminated against in the services they can access and are treated in a culturally appropriate manner. This is a crucial element in creating a sense of belonging and support within CALD communities.

Monitoring the effectiveness of policy and service delivery can be a complex matter, particularly with regard to CALD communities, some members of which may be limited in their capacity, or inclination to present feedback to government. It is for this reason that the ECCV submit that the Victorian Government engage in in-depth consultations with local ethno-specific and multicultural organisations, as well as peak bodies, in order to explore and develop a strategy for accessing this vital feedback.

As per Recommendation 2 of this submission, we refer the Victorian Government to the ECCV's "Access and Equity- It's all about Relationships", which includes some suggestions regarding standards and monitoring.

The ECCV recommend:

16. That a whole of government approach be taken to capturing and sharing data regarding service users

17. That Victorian Government agencies record the following client data, to assist with service planning and delivery:

- Country of birth
- Ancestry
- Languages spoken
- Preferred language
- Self-ascribed ethnicity
- Year of arrival in Australia

18. That the Victorian Government engage in in-depth consultations with local ethno-specific and multicultural organisations, as well as peak bodies, in order to develop a strategy for measuring the effectiveness of government policy and service delivery relating to the needs of diverse Victorians

Other pertinent issues:

The ECCV submit that the Victorian Government should be proactive in ensuring that their workforce reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Victorian community. As one of the State's largest employers the practical and symbolic significance of a more diverse workforce cannot be overestimated. At present CALD Victorians are underrepresented in the Victorian public service. The ECCV urge the State government to support in-depth research on this matter, with a view to identifying and overcoming the factors that appear to inhibit the employment of CALD Victorians in this sector.

The ECCV recommend:

19. That the Victorian Government be proactive in ensuring that their workforce reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Victorian community
20. That the Victorian Government provide the resources required to undertake research regarding the current underrepresentation of CALD Victorians in the public service, with a view to identifying the measures that need to be taken to rectify this imbalance.

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