

ECCV submission to the Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce

March 2018

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the peak policy advocacy body for ethno-specific and multicultural organisations in Victoria and represents approximately 200 member organisations including eight regional Ethnic Communities Councils. ECCV is a member of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia (FECCA). ECCV acknowledges the work of the Federal Department of Health in continuing to build a renowned and culturally appropriate aged care system. ECCV thanks the Federal Government for the opportunity to contribute to the discussions on the Development of an Aged Care Workforce Strategy.

PART A: DEMOGRAPHICS

Do you give consent for your submission to be published in whole or in part?

Yes

Are you answering on behalf of an organisation?: Yes

If yes, please provide your organisation's name: Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV)

If you answered yes to the above question, do you have authority from your organisation to answer?

Yes

Where do you live or where is your organisation based?

Victoria

What role best describes your organisation?

Aged care advocacy

Peak body – consumer

Does your organisation provide support or services to any people with diverse characteristics or life experiences?

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

In which states/territories does your organisation deliver services?

Victoria

What role best describes you?

Aged care consumer advocate

Do you identify with any of the following groups with diverse characteristics and life experiences?

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

PART B: SHAPING THE AGED CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGY

1. Why does an aged care workforce strategy matter?

The Development of an Aged Care Workforce Strategy is an opportunity for ECCV to highlight the importance of a culturally responsive Aged Care Workforce Strategy. ECCV believes that the bilingual and bicultural skills that many Australians have are not utilised at full potential, particularly as the aged care sector will have a steadily increasing demand for more personalised services and interactions.

Recommendation 1:

ECCV recommends that the Aged Care Workforce Strategy acknowledges and responds to the diversity of the Australian population including a culturally diverse aged care workforce and older clients from culturally diverse backgrounds.

2. What practical difference do you hope a strategy will make?

The ECCV highlights the increasing casualisation of the aged care workforce which is very culturally diverse. ECCV underlines that it is vital that culturally diverse aged care workers have access to secure and stable employment conditions to ensure quality care for aged care service users.

Employees from non-English speaking backgrounds are more likely to seek employment and are likely to be more effective in an organisation where the employer is inclusive and responsive to people's cultural traditions, expertise and skills. Creating a culturally inclusive work environment encourages diverse viewpoints and promotes a welcoming workplace. In Victoria, the Commonwealth Home Support Programme providers have therefore been developing diversity plans to meet the needs of a diverse clientele and workforce.

Recommendation 2:

ECCV recommends that the Federal Government considers research into attracting and retaining a culturally inclusive workforce and on the effectiveness of aged care providers in offering a culturally inclusive work environment.

3. How do you think a strategy can contribute to meeting future needs in aged care?

Australia is a multicultural, multi-faith and multilingual nation. Statistical data shows that Victorians come from more than 200 countries, speak 260 languages and dialects and follow 135 religious faiths. 27 percent of Victorian seniors are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds¹ and they may revert to their mother tongue² and as they age and often do not speak English well. The FECCA-ECCV consultation 2014-15³ highlighted that for post-War migrants there were no or little opportunities to learn English:

“The men in the Riverland region, for instance, worked long hours undertaking hard physical work in agricultural jobs, and did not have much time for English language learning. The nature of their work left them less opportunity to engage with the wider community as immigrants who were working in manufacturing and other industries. These workers were often working more closely with English-speaking colleagues. Their wives, however, were often limited to ‘supermarket’ English and spoke their own language at home.”

This example from the FECCA-ECCV consultation report illustrates how important it is for older people from CALD backgrounds to receive assistance in their preferred language in order to ensure equitable access to services and information. It is imperative that an aged care workforce strategy takes into consideration the linguistic but also cultural and religious diversity of service users and aged care workers.

¹ FECCA, 2015, Review of Australian Research on Older People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

² De Bot, K. and Clyne, M.,1989. Language Reversion Revisited. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 11, pp 167-177

³ FECCA-ECCV Aged Care Consultations 2014-15

Recommendation 3

ECCV recommends that the Federal Government supports and resources policy advocacy of multicultural organisations in each State and Territory to ensure workers and consumers from culturally diverse backgrounds are appropriately represented in aged care workforce discussions.

Recommendation 4

ECCV recommends that the Federal Government continues to fund and support culturally inclusive training as a whole-of-organisation approach to facilitate culturally appropriate service delivery.

4. Tell us what you see as the changes on the horizon that aged care needs to be ready for, and how you think the workforce strategy can contribute to meeting these future needs (in the context of an ageing population calling on aged care services in a variety of settings)?

Many ethno-specific, multicultural and culturally inclusive organisations employ bilingual workers to enable and facilitate communication with consumers and leverage on people's cultural and linguistic expertise. However, the ability to speak a language other than English and cultural expertise is not widely recognised to be a professional skill. ECCV believes that this linked to the lack of accreditation practices of language skills in an aged care context and also to limited employer recognition of bilingual expertise.

Culturally inclusive care practices are an important pillar of Australia's excellent aged care system. The effective delivery of culturally inclusive care requires bilingual and bi-cultural skills and sensitivity towards religious and spiritual traditions and customs. Considering the increase in consumers from culturally diverse backgrounds as well as the current undersupply of a culturally responsive aged care workforce, ECCV believes that it is timely to consider how to make Australia's aged care workforce more culturally competent and inclusive.

ECCV recommends more investment in the training of a multilingual aged care workforce and which could include:

- Accreditation of bilingual and bi-cultural skills;
- Language teaching on aged care specific terminology;
- Training to effectively interact with culturally, linguistically and spiritually diverse consumers.

ECCV believes that the development of such bilingual workforce initiatives would demonstrate a significant return on investments and provide cost savings for the Federal Government in the delivery of aged care services. ECCV also advocates for commissioning a scoping study on community and business risks-and-benefits of upscaling training of Australia's bilingual and bi-cultural aged care workforce.

Recommendation 5:

ECCV recommends that the Federal Government considers commissioning a scoping study on the accreditation of bilingual aged care courses and other training to facilitate meeting the needs of older culturally diverse people.

5. Tell us what is working well in the aged care workforce (across the industry, at provider or service level or through place-based initiatives) and where future opportunities lie.

Seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds often have a preference for ethno-specific and multicultural services due to their expertise in providing care that responds to their cultural, linguistic and spiritual preferences. Further, these services often have established relationships of trust with the community over many years. Ethno-specific social support services also provide a culturally and linguistically safe context for older people of diverse backgrounds to socialise, enhancing connectedness and mental wellbeing whilst reducing social isolation.

Ethno-specific and multicultural aged care agencies and their bilingual workforce and health educators play a pivotal role in promoting healthy ageing, community capacity building and equitable access to aged care services for multicultural seniors. These agencies have invaluable expertise and are highly regarded in providing culturally appropriate services, which may include but are not limited to:

- Services in the preferred language;
- Cultural and spiritual care;
- Bilingual staff;
- Community education;
- Culturally specific dementia and palliative care;
- Culturally appropriate food.

Recommendation 6:

ECCV recommends that the Federal Government strengthens Australia's bilingual aged care workforce, including those located at ethno-specific and multicultural service providers, through appropriate training and accreditation of bilingual and bicultural skills.

6. What do you think are the key factors the Taskforce needs to consider to attract and retain staff?

Many regional centres in Victoria and Australia more widely are diverse in terms of cultures, languages spoken and spiritual beliefs. Migrant Resource Centres and Ethnic and Multicultural Communities' Councils in Victoria's regional areas have been attracting culturally competent staff and working with clients from non-English speaking backgrounds including in Settlement Services and in facilitating access to aged care services. Some ethno-specific aged care providers from metropolitan Melbourne maintain small offices in regional centres which enables them to provide services to consumers in regional areas.

The Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care program and regional Victorian Ethnic and Multicultural Communities' Councils have been working in close partnership with aged care agencies and healthcare providers in developing regional-specific resources, strategies, training and networks that support mainstream organisations on culturally appropriate care and practices.

Recommendation 7

ECCV recommends that the Federal Department of Health facilitates culturally inclusive aged care training in regional and rural areas, especially in those areas with a high proportion of culturally diverse seniors.

ECCV also reiterates the importance for the Taskforce to consider issues relating to a diverse workforce and diverse consumers.

Recommendation 8

ECCV recommends that the Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce assesses the importance of culturally appropriate care for consumers from culturally diverse backgrounds and ensures that an Aged Care Workforce Strategy responds to the growing cultural diversity of the aged care workforce and their needs and preferences.

7. What areas of knowledge, skills and capability need to be strengthened within the aged care workforce?

ECCV reiterates the importance of cultural responsiveness across the different areas in developing an Aged Care Workforce Strategy. ECCV further believes that social and community oriented care is particularly important to consider as many migrants come from collectivist cultures. Therefore, individualised care need to be also considered in the context of community including local community, family, language and people's culture.

Recommendation 9:

ECCV recommends that the Federal Government considers focusing more on aged care service provision in the context of people's family, culture and community.

8. What do you think is needed to improve and better equip the workforce to meet individual needs and expectations?

ECCV has no specific comments on this issue.

9. What is needed for leadership, mindset and accountability to innovate and extend new way of working tailored to the needs of older people who use aged care services, their families, carers and communities?

ECCV highlights that many older people from culturally diverse backgrounds were brought up in collectivist cultures as opposed to individualist culture and which is more prevalent in Australia. It is important that aged care workers are aware of culturally appropriate care and cultural considerations when delivering services to culturally diverse seniors.

Recommendation 10:

ECCV recommends that the Federal Government promotes culturally appropriate high quality care, including cultural competence training and resources ethno-specific and multicultural services providers to deliver services sustainably.

10. What should aged care providers consider with workforce planning?

ECCV has no specific comments on this question.

11. In undertaking its work, the Taskforce has been asked to have regard to recent submissions to and reports of relevant inquiries on aged care workforce matters, and government responses. If you want the Taskforce to draw on a submission you have made, or evidence or materials you want to draw to our attention, please provide the details in the text box below.

ECCV has no additional comments under this section.

12. Is there anything else that you would like to contribute to inform the Taskforce?

ECCV has no additional comments under this section.

For more information, please contact Nikolaus Rittinghausen, Policy Officer - Aged Care, on (03) 9354 9555 and nrittinghausen@eccv.org.au.