$ Valuing Diversity $

ECCV
State Budget Submission
for 2012-2013
The Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria Inc. (ECCV) is the peak body for ethnic and multicultural organisations in Victoria. It is a community based, member driven organisation committed to empowering people from diverse multicultural backgrounds. We are proud to have been the key advocate for culturally diverse communities in Victoria since 1974. For over 35 years we have been the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community.

The organisation advocates and lobbies all levels of government on behalf of multicultural communities in areas like human rights, access and equity, improving services, racism and discrimination, community harmony, employment, education and training, health and community services, disability, child protection law and justice, and arts and culture. We advocate on any issue that is of concern to our members.

We also help build the capacity of new and emerging communities and develop policy on a wide range of issues including undertaking original research often in collaboration with major tertiary institutions.

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Foreword

Victoria continues to be a multicultural success story. It is important that our State takes full advantage of the opportunities offered by the men and women from culturally diverse backgrounds. They bring diverse skills and energy to Victoria. Newly arrived people from refugee backgrounds are enthusiastic to find work. They have the drive to get ahead in their jobs. It is important to remove all discriminating obstacles in the workforce.

ECCV presents practical strategies and cultural diversity solutions in this submission for the 2012-2013 financial year. A resilient Victorian economy is one that values our multilingual and multicultural resources in metropolitan as well as regional and rural Victoria. Culturally responsive training of service providers, partnerships with our ethnic and multicultural sector, and good jobs for men and women from many cultural backgrounds will ensure prosperity for current and future generations.

Victoria has a significant multicultural, ageing population. There are many older people from non-English speaking backgrounds keen to retrain, learn new skills and improve their English to re-enter the workforce. A culturally diverse workforce increases competitiveness. A culturally diverse workforce means more productivity. ECCV would like to see the Victorian Government invest in job initiatives that will create a culturally diverse workforce to benefit all Victorians and not just a few.

Victoria has a high performing health system with positive reforms underway. Our ageing population is living healthier and longer. Frail older people from non-English speaking backgrounds often miss out on enjoying their golden years in the best of health through no fault of their own. If translated information is more readily available they will be able to access services to help them stay living at home longer. If aged care services are culturally responsive they will find it easier to participate. Same-language social support groups are a great way for them to stay fit and happy. Culturally responsive health literacy programs for ethnic communities would reduce chronic diseases.

ECCV looks forward to a Victorian budget that invests in cultural awareness training for government funded service providers to produce a workforce with high self-esteem, willing to work with people from many different cultures. ECCV represents a wide network of ethnic and multicultural agencies. Victorian policies and programs that encourage coordinated support across government departments, and ethnic and multicultural community service organisations, will maximise our State’s cultural diversity expertise.

I commend this Victorian State Government submission for the financial year 2012-2013 on behalf of Victoria’s culturally diverse communities.

Joe Caputo OAM JP
Chairperson
Executive Summary

Victoria’s multicultural population is a reality that offers significant social and economic potential. Community languages are a valuable economic resource. Victoria’s workforce is missing out on the full advantage of its culturally diverse labour resource. State budget initiatives that support training and retention of a culturally diverse workforce would contribute to a strong and competitive economy.

ECCV welcomes the focus on partnerships in Victoria’s Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. Opportunities exist for enhancing partnerships with the multicultural community sector. People from non-English speaking backgrounds tend to access services in familiar ethnic welfare agencies. Frail and ageing people from culturally diverse backgrounds have higher rates of chronic disease that potentially places a burden on the Victorian community. Many of those conditions are preventable. A State Budget that invests in early intervention strategies targeted at people from non-English speaking communities is a good and wise investment.

Other issues that confront culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians include maximising access to aged care services as well as supporting younger people with different cultural backgrounds to continue their caring roles whilst preparing for their pathways in training and employment. Sound investment is needed to prevent violence against women in ethnic communities; improve the mental health and wellbeing of culturally diverse groups; and maximise the workforce contribution of people from new and emerging communities. A budget that makes the best economic use of its scarce resources on culturally responsive education and coordinated support around ethnic communities is a budget that would drive Victoria to a stronger future.

This submission makes key recommendations that address:

- Regional settlement
- Health and wellbeing
- Language education and services
- New and emerging communities
- Multicultural community grants
- Ethnic aged care
- Pensioner lifestyle
- Violence against women
- Youth issues
ECCV Highlights 2011-2012
Advocacy through partnerships

**Working for Young People**

ECCV report: Refugee and migrant young people with caring responsibilities: what do we know? (2011)

*Partnerships to raise awareness*

ECCV worked with the Centre for Multicultural Youth and Carers Victoria to tell hidden stories about young people from non-English speaking backgrounds that have caring responsibilities.

**Outcomes:**
- Suggested policy solutions for improving support, work and education pathways for young refugees and migrants with caring responsibilities.
- Report published on *Australian Policy Online* website.
- Continued advocacy and collaboration with our project partners

**Working for Older People**

ECCV HACC Aged Care Pathways Project

*A cultural diversity policy co-design initiative*

ECCV is funded for 2011-12 through the Victorian HACC (Home and Community Care) Program to establish better pathways between HACC aged care Assessment Services in local government and the ethnic community sector. This small, cost-effective project has a far-reaching impact. It minimises bureaucratic hurdles. It maximises HACC referrals and assessments processes for ethnic communities. Government and community groups work together to make policy work on the ground.

*Desired outcome:*
- Improved access to HACC services for frail older people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

*Project status:*
- On track

**Working with Ethnic Providers**

ECCV Aged Care Trend Briefing and Ministerial Visit

*Culturally responsive aged care*

ECCV hosted an aged care trend briefing forum for ethnic and multicultural aged care managers in February 2012 to discuss issues with the Hon David Davis MP, Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing. They discussed aged care reforms and strategies for a more culturally responsive health and aged care sector.

*Outcome:*
- Acknowledgment of ECCV as a key organisation that the State Government looks to for advice on matters relating to cultural diversity and aged care.
- The Minister announced a three year funding package directed to the ECCV on a CALD Seniors Social Participation Grant project and an Elder Abuse Community Education and Training strategy.

**Working with Local Government**

ECCV Partners with Local Government

*Culturally responsive awareness raising*

ECCV believes that a culturally responsive workforce helps to reduce discrimination and improves staff self-esteem. ECCV jointly conducted a forum with the Municipal Association of Victoria on partnerships in aged care. It was part of a series of forums in 2011 that linked representatives from Victoria’s 79 local government municipalities with ethnic aged care providers. They shared stories, experiences and perspectives around working together and securing equal access to services for older Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds.

*Survey outcome:*
- Increased cultural diversity knowledge and strategies
- Improved culturally responsive networking

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ECCV - Working for over 35 years for multicultural Victorians
1. **A Victorian Multicultural Snapshot**

1.1 ECCV believes it is important the State Budget builds on the economic, social and cultural potential of multicultural Victoria.

1.2 Victoria is the most culturally diverse of all Australian states with:

- 28 per cent of the population born overseas in more than 230 countries;
- 45 per cent either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas;
- 72.8 per cent of Victorians from predominantly non-English speaking countries;
- 200 languages other than English (LOTE) spoken by Victorians; and
- 69 per cent represented in more than 120 religions.

2. **Regional Settlement**

*Regional Ethnic Communities’ Councils*

2.1 ECCV notes that the population of Victoria is changing as more people from emerging communities are settling in regional Victoria. ECCV is represented in seven rural and regional locations of Victoria. These regional Ethnic Communities’ Councils (ECCs) are in Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Wangaratta, Shepparton, Gippsland and Mildura. The regional ECCs play an important role in supporting and advocating for multicultural groups, to maintain community harmony in regional and rural Victoria.

2.2 ECCV emphasises that the activities of regional ECCs include advocacy and support for improving employment opportunities for non-English speaking people, assisting with good settlement, and ensuring the health and wellbeing of people from non-English speaking backgrounds. The advocacy work of the smaller ECCs is stretched to the limit. They depend on minimal organisational support grants from the Victorian Multicultural Commission ($6,000 per annum) which is insufficient to cover basic administration costs.

2.3 ECCV believes that minimal government investment in regional ECCs for basic office space and administrative support would lead to significant positive settlement outcomes for culturally diverse families.

**Recommendation 1**

ECCV recommends that the State Government funds smaller regional ECCs for sustainable administration support and basic office space.

**Regional migration**

2.4 ECCV supports the State Government’s *Global Skills for Provincial Victoria (GSPV)* program aimed to attract overseas skilled migrants and to facilitate the regional settlement process. ECCV believes it is important that the program continues to attract skilled professionals, tradespeople and business owners from overseas to meet Victoria’s ongoing workforce needs that cannot be met locally. Furthermore it is vital that the program provides adequate support to welcome families, offers them resources and
information about accommodation, health and education as well as linking them to local ethnic communities and migrant support initiatives.

**Recommendation 2**

ECCV recommends that the State Government continues to fund the *Regional Skilled Migration Coordinators* in 10 regions in Victoria as part of its *Global Skills for Provincial Victoria (GSPV)* program.

### 3. Health and Wellbeing

**Health Literacy**

3.1 ECCV welcomes the Victorian Coalition Government’s Health Priorities Framework 2012-2022 and the $60 billion investment committed over four years to health and aged care services. ECCV believes that a State Budget investment in a culturally responsive health prevention strategy targeted at Victoria’s growing multicultural and ageing population would reduce the increasing burden of chronic disease and injury on the health care system.

3.2 ECCV feedback indicates that older, frail people from culturally diverse backgrounds have higher rates of depression, dementia and incontinence than the average population. They tend to access healthcare services later when they reach a point of crisis.

3.3 ECCV points out that people from non-English speaking countries, and those in remote regions, have significantly lower levels of health literacy. Australian research indicates that language is the primary barrier to participation in healthy living pathways as well as lack of culturally specific care.

3.4 ECCV emphasises that culturally and linguistically responsive health promotion increases access to services and improves the wellbeing of people from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. ECCV would like to see resources allocated, within the Victorian Government’s *Metropolitan Health Plan* and *Regional and Rural Health Plan*, for health literacy programs targeted at Victoria’s non-English speaking communities to reduce health care costs.

**Mental Health**

3.5 ECCV advocates for the culturally responsive implementation of Victoria’s mental health reforms. ECCV notes there is a shortage of bilingual mental health counsellors. Furthermore ECCV believes that local collaboration between mental health providers and ethnic and multicultural agencies provides an effective avenue for addressing mental illness amongst people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

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Recommendation 3
ECCV recommends that the Victorian Coalition Government ensures that the $84.1 million 2011-12 funding initiative for ‘public health – prevention and early intervention strategies’ be extended and restructured to fund culturally responsive health literacy programs targeted at people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Recommendation 4
ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government funds the training, recruitment and retention of bilingual mental health counsellors within the framework of responsive mental health reforms

Recommendation 5
ECCV recommends that the State Budget funds community-based mental health care pilot programs that collaborate between health providers and local ethnic and multicultural community organisations.

4. Language Education

4.1 Languages are a vital multicultural resource for the Victorian economy. ECCV welcomes the Victorian Government’s budget commitment to improving diversity in languages education in both mainstream and community languages schools.

Community languages education

4.2 After hours community languages schools play an important complementary role to the school system in maintaining Victoria’s language resources. ECCV welcomes the Victorian Government’s 2011-2012 State Budget in providing $16.3 million over four years to support our community languages schools. ECCV notes that the Ethnic Schools Association of Victoria (ESAV), as the community languages schools peak organisation representing about 200 Victorian ethnic schools, provides essential support to its members in the form of conferences, professional development and advice.

4.3 Victoria’s community languages schools annually receive $190 per student for a total of 36,700 school-aged students through the ESAV. ECCV is aware that the ESAV administration and insurance costs are rising each year. An increase in the student per capita government funding would ensure that the community languages schools do not carry the burden of ESAV’s rising costs.

Recommendation 6
ECCV recommends that the State Budget provides an increase of $75,000 per annum to fund ESAV, representing a $2 per capita funding increase for each student per year.
Language education in schools

4.4 ECCV notes that 68 per cent of students from non-English speaking backgrounds attend government schools in Australia. Primary and secondary school teachers are sometimes challenged to engage young people from diverse new and emerging communities in schools, requiring additional strategies and initiatives to enable those students to reach their full educational potential.

4.5 ECCV welcomes the Commonwealth Government's Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling (2012), in particular the recommendation on Schooling Resource Standards (SRS) funding for disadvantaged students from refugee and non-English speaking backgrounds.

4.6 ECCV notes that school students from non-English speaking backgrounds benefit from alternative vocational Year 12 initiatives that cater for disadvantaged students at risk of dropping out. ECCV is concerned that the $12 million a year funding cuts to the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) would limit the crucial alternatives for disadvantaged culturally diverse students.

Recommendation 7
ECCV recommends that the Victorian State Budget ensure that the proposed SRS funding is allocated to schools with students from non-English speaking and refugee backgrounds.

Recommendation 8
ECCV recommends that schools and tertiary institutions receive adequate funding for the coordination of VCAL in schools with disadvantaged culturally diverse populations.

Training language teachers

4.7 ECCV applauds the Victorian Government's strong commitment to languages education in schools to create one of the world’s most diverse and effective languages education programs, as stated in the Victorian Government’s Vision for Languages Education 2011.

4.8 ECCV believes teachers have a critical role to play therefore there is a need to increase the number of qualified languages teachers and to ensure they are trained as languages teachers to the highest standards.

Recommendation 9
ECCV recommends that the State Budget allocations continue to support language teaching across a broad range of languages in schools and tertiary institutions.

5. Language Services

5.1 ECCV advocates for an effective language services strategy to ensure that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have improved access and equity of service provision in Victoria.
5.2 ECCV is pleased that multicultural Victoria has extensive language resources. ECCV believes organisations face the challenges of providing a wide range of translation and interpreting services for new and emerging languages as well as maintaining language service support for our more established and ageing migrant communities.

5.3 ECCV notes that the Liberal National Coalition Government made a commitment to provide an additional $2 million to increase the training of interpreters and translators in established and emerging languages.

**Recommendation 10**
ECCV recommends that government departments have adequate funding to utilise on-site telephone interpreter services where and when they are required.

**Recommendation 11**
ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government ensures that $2 million is allocated to increase the training of interpreters and translators in established and emerging languages.

6. **New and Emerging Communities**

6.1 Australian research\(^2\) indicates that discrimination amongst people from migrant and refugee backgrounds ‘contributes to depression, poor quality of life, psychological distress and substance misuse.’ It restricts access to employment and housing.

**Workforce diversity**

6.2 Cultural diversity in the workforce has been found to be associated with increased productivity. Victorians from new and emerging communities represent a significant workforce resource and yet many struggle to find and retain jobs. In times of tight budgets, swift and appropriate cooperation between government and the ethnic and multicultural community sector would maximise workforce participation.

6.3 ECCV believes that job security and advancement for people from refugee backgrounds is enhanced through programs that develop practical core skills. Effective strategies include on the job mentoring as well as regular collaboration between mentors and management to ensure that job promotion pathways are achievable.

6.4 ECCV recognises that many Victorians value cultural diversity. There is however, some feedback of indirect discrimination that could reduce workforce productivity. The economic costs of discrimination include absenteeism, the expensive handling of grievances, staff turnover and related replacement recruitment and healthcare costs.

6.5 ECCV advocates for additional resources allocated to cultural awareness training in government and funded agency workplaces to address discrimination. This would ensure that employees from

\(^2\) VicHealth 2008 Research Summary Paper #3 Ethnic and Race Based Discrimination
culturally diverse backgrounds obtain employment speedily and then have more opportunity to reach their fullest potential in their jobs.

**Recommendation 12**
ECCV recommends that the State Budget funds innovative initiatives aimed at sustainable employment and job advancement for people from new and emerging communities.

**Recommendation 13**
ECCV recommends that the State Budget funds human rights and anti-discrimination training for all staff in government and funded agencies.

**Affordable housing**

6.6 Many job seekers from new and emerging communities are disadvantaged due to lack of affordable social housing and the risk of mental illness. Gaining employment often overcomes depression. Integrated support would overcome the associated risk of homelessness, provide mental health support and improve access to the workforce.

**Recommendation 14**
ECCV recommends that the State Budget provides funding to ethno-specific and multicultural agencies to develop partnerships with local government and employment agencies to provide integrated housing, employment and health support for people from new and emerging communities.

**Support for growing ethnic communities**

6.7 Victoria’s strength as a successful multicultural society lies in the support provided to its ethnic organisations. ECCV welcomed the Liberal Nationals Coalition Government’s commitment to provide $150,000 over three years to assist Victoria’s African communities with leadership development.

**Recommendation 15**
ECCV recommends that the Victorian State Budget provides adequate funds over the next three years for leadership initiatives in Victoria’s new and emerging communities.

7. **Cultural Festivals and Multicultural Community Strengthening Grants**

7.1 ECCV welcomes the Victorian Government’s ongoing commitment to the Victorian Multicultural Commission’s (VMC) community grants programs that include unity through partnerships grants, festivals grants as well as the media internship grants for strengthening ethnic communities.
Recommendation 16
ECCV recommends that the Victorian State Budget continues to support and extend the VMC community grants programs.

8. Ethnic Aged Care
8.1 ECCV welcomes the $27 million provided for the Victorian Home and Community Care (HACC) Program in 2011-12 to continue support to older people in the community as well as the HACC Commonwealth matching funds of $15.8 million for additional HACC services in Victoria. ECCV also welcomes the Victorian HACC Program’s investment in approximately 50 ethno-specific Planned Activity Groups (PAGs) and its contribution to strengthening smaller ethnic agencies through HACC access and support funds.

8.2 In Victoria, 40 per cent of people over 65 years are from non-English speaking backgrounds and in some local government areas that figure is as high as 60 per cent. It makes sense, therefore, that culturally responsive aged care services should be a mainstream and core service provision.

8.3 ECCV believes that the Victorian Government has the opportunity to establish a sound HACC infrastructure that would have a far-reaching impact on the health and wellbeing of Victoria’s multicultural society by supporting the early intervention initiatives targeted at frail, older Victorians from non-English speaking backgrounds.

8.4 Australian research\(^3\) points out that older people from non-English speaking backgrounds choose to stay living at home longer and have a preference for ethno-specific aged care services. ECCV notes that these trends align well with the move to a person-centred Active Service Model that respects people’s choices and preferences in aged care HACC service provision.

HACC Planned Activity Groups (PAGs)

8.5 ECCV emphasises that ethno-specific PAGs produce far-reaching health benefits for frail older people from non-English speaking backgrounds by providing same-language social interaction for isolated people and by supporting ethnic family carers with culturally appropriate respite.

8.6 ECCV believes that funding additional ethno-specific PAGs would have a significant cost-saving impact on the healthcare system by providing the infrastructure for long-term support for social participation of Victoria’s multicultural older people, at a reasonably low cost. Ethno-specific PAGs also provide the ideal avenue for culturally responsive health promotion that would reduce chronic disease in the long-term.

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\(^3\) Monash University and ECCV 2010 *Practising Positive Partnerships in the Ethnic and Multicultural Community*
**Recommendation 17**
ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government provides a budget allocation that supports and expands HACC ethno-specific PAGs.

*Smaller ethnic organisations*

8.7 ECCV points out that Victoria’s extensive network of not-for-profit ethnic community organisations play an important role in providing culturally responsive social support activities for frail and elderly people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Ethnic agencies make a significant contribution to the healthcare and ageing sectors by providing teams of bilingual volunteers. In particular, smaller ethnic organisations serve as an effective doorway for culturally diverse older people to access services earlier to enable them to live at home longer and with a quality of life.

8.8 ECCV believes that the future of the health and ageing sectors increasingly depends on government support for coordinating volunteer commitment in the not-for-profit sector. ECCV advocates for government support to strengthen the capacity of smaller ethnic organisations to recruit, train and sustain bilingual volunteers.

**Recommendation 18**
ECCV recommends that Victorian HACC funding continues to support existing smaller ethnic organisations.

**Recommendation 19**
ECCV recommends that the Victorian HACC Program annually allocates ‘start-up’ aged care funding for smaller existing and emerging ethnic agencies that are not funded for HACC services.

*CALD Social Isolation Grants*

8.9 ECCV welcomes the Victorian Government’s four year grants program for the Participation for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Seniors that awards up to $10,000 to eligible organisations for social participation projects for socially isolated culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) seniors. ECCV points out that it is important to sustain and develop the CALD Social Isolation Grants as there are over 400 Ethnic Seniors Citizens Clubs in Victoria, as well as outreach potential through a wide range of ethnic and multicultural community organisations.

**Recommendation 20**
ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government continues to fund the CALD Seniors Social Isolation grants program.

9. *Pensioner Lifestyle*
9.1 The majority of full pensioners in Victoria are from non-English speaking backgrounds. Due to increases in living expenses, many pensioners are struggling to make ends meet. They have difficulty
maintaining a basic healthy lifestyle with increased costs of gas, water and electricity, transport and council rates.

9.2 ECCV supports the Victorian Fair Go For Pensioner Coalition’s (FGPC) claims to relieve the burden of increased costs of living. When pensioner concessions were introduced in the early 1980 they were equivalent to 50 per cent of the average council rates, however rising costs have reduced them to around 10 per cent of average rates.

9.3 ECCV and the FGPC welcome the initiatives already undertaken by the Victorian Government to make a difference to the quality of life and wellbeing of senior pensioners such as:

- Winter Energy Concession rates standardised throughout the year, in recognition that cooling systems in summer are as important as heating systems in winter
- Parliamentary Inquiry into the Opportunities for Participation of Older Victorians that recognises Victoria’s ageing population and their needs and concerns
- Review of the Charter of Rights demonstrates the Government’s recognition of the importance of human rights for Victorian senior pensioners.

9.4 ECCV agrees with the FGPC that growth funding for established programs for senior pensioners and the funding of reinstated concession discounts is critical in the next State Budget.

9.5 ECCV and the FGPC call on the State Government to invest in the future of our senior pensioners by acting now to:

- introduce increases in the senior pensioner concession rates for both utilities and council rates
- reintroduce senior pensioner motor vehicle registration concession discount

Recommendation 21
ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government increases the pensioner concession rates for gas, electricity, water, transport and council rates.

10. Action on Violence against Women from CALD Backgrounds
Responsiveness

10.1 Family violence in ethnic communities is largely hidden and women from non-English speaking backgrounds tend not to seek support. This often results in the need for crisis support. ECCV welcomes the Victorian Government’s commitment of over $75 million for primary prevention, early intervention and responsiveness to address violence against women.

10.2 ECCV welcomes the Victorian Government’s commitment to investing $2m in early intervention and $4m for prevention initiatives in domestic violence. In 2012 ECCV community consultations indicated that it is important to redirect adequate financial support specifically for culturally diverse education strategies to address family violence.
**Recommendation 22**
ECCV recommends that the State Government increases the $75 million currently dedicated to addressing violence against women and ensures that funds are re-directed to target culturally diverse communities for early intervention and prevention around family support; strengthening relationships within families; and intergenerational programs.

11. **Youth from CALD Backgrounds**  
**Carers support**

11.1 ECCV notes that racial discrimination has a serious detrimental impact on the health, employment and education of young people as their adolescent and early adulthood are vulnerable years.

11.2 ECCV research highlights the hidden incidence of young people from non-English speaking backgrounds with caring responsibilities that hinder their education and employment opportunities.

**Recommendation 23**
ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government allocates resources for human rights and anti-discrimination education projects in schools.

**Recommendation 24**
ECCV recommends that the State Budget adequately supports and funds a range of training and employment pathways projects for young people from non-English speaking backgrounds with caring responsibilities.

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4 VicHealth Research Paper Summary #3 Ethnic and Race Based Discrimination 2008  
5 ECCV Discussion Paper Refugee and Migrant Young People with Caring Responsibilities: What do we Know?  
Completed in partnership with Carers Victoria and Centre for Multicultural Youth 2011  