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council of
victoria**

ECCV Comments on the HACC Social Support and Respite Review Reports of the Department of Health January 2011

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (eccv) advocates and lobbies all levels of government on behalf of multicultural communities in a range of areas especially aged care. The eccv represents the views of the Aged Care Policy Committee whose members consist of HACC managers and aged care providers in the ethnic and multicultural aged care sector.

The eccv welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *HACC Social Support and Respite Review Reports* provided by the Department of Health and Health Outcomes International (HOI). These are:

- Focus Group Report Jan 2011
- Survey Report January 2011
- Summary – Social Support and Respite Evaluation

The eccv supports the key findings within the reports, in particular the focus on more support for carers. We acknowledge that those key findings provide a broad overview for a more responsive and flexible service.

The eccv believes there is additional valuable information in these reports about how ethno-specific Planned Activity Groups (PAGs) effectively meet the needs of older people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Ethno-specific PAGs are a vital part of the HACC social support and respite program. They have a distinctive approach which differs from other PAGs and is particularly responsive to the personal preferences of older people from CALD backgrounds.

The HOI Survey Report (p14) has listed ethno-specific PAGs as an 'innovative practice' in the delivery of group based social support services. The intention of this submission is to collate some of the more detailed stakeholder comments and findings in the *HOI Focus Groups* and *Survey Reports* about the effectiveness of effective ethno-specific PAGs.

1. Ethno-specific PAGs as innovative practice

1.1 Distinctive features and characteristics

The findings show that ethno-specific PAGs are flexible, innovative and responsive in that they provide:

- Education and information sessions
- Transport services
- Friendly visiting services to residential care
- Social connectedness

Additional responsive social support programs for older people from CALD backgrounds listed in the report are:

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Carlton Victoria 3053

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- Telelink
- CALD Seniors' Surfers Projects

Common themes that emerged in the reports about group services for people from CALD backgrounds show they would benefit from:

- Increased awareness of the social support services
- Response to the growth in ethno client demand

A more detailed analysis of the information provided in the HOI reports highlights the following aspects of the ethno-specific PAG model.

1.2 Education/information in ethno-specific PAGs

Agencies were asked to list “the three most relevant activities undertaken in the group” (p5 Survey Report). Ethno-specific PAGs played a distinctive role in providing information to older people from non-English speaking backgrounds. The graph on *PAG Activities by Organisation Type* shows that “Education and information sessions represent over 25% of activities listed by CALD organisations compared to around 5% for other organisation types” (p11 Survey Report).

Activities listed under *Education/information sessions* are on health literacy and personal safety topics such as dementia awareness, falls prevention; depression information; diabetes management as well as social welfare issues (Table 2.1.2 p28 survey Report).

1.3 Partnerships

Partnerships are listed as one of the critical success factors to the sustainability of the Active Service Model and Well for Life initiatives. The findings show that PAG education/information activities featured good working partnerships within health and social networks.

1.4 Cultural understandings

In the section on *Innovative PAGs*, activities providing cultural understandings for CALD groups are:

- Internet use and Internet training to increase cross-cultural understanding for participants from CALD backgrounds.
- Group tours of CALD PAGs to nursing homes with the positive outcome of some people entering residential aged care.

(p20 Focus Group Report)

1.5 Transport provision

The graph on *Group Support Services Provided by Organisation Type* shows a significant provision of transport services by agencies with CALD groups (fig. 2.6 p12 Survey Report).

1.6 Friendly visiting programs

The graph showing the *Distribution of Services to Individuals by Organisation Type* indicates that “CALD organisations have a proportionately high percentage of friendly visiting services and transport compared to other organisation types” (fig. 3.2 p28 Survey Report).



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1.7 Increased promotion

Stakeholders said they need more PAG promotion and awareness to the CALD community. They also indicated this may generate too much demand for current available services (p17 Focus Group Report).

1.8 Barriers

Respondents were asked to comment on barriers to service delivery. "Growth in ethnic client demand" was identified as a key barrier impacting on the delivery of group based social services. Respondents further elaborated on the need to address the geographic dispersal of older people from CALD backgrounds as follows:

"Elderly people from a CALD background are dispersed across all regions. Therefore for the elderly to benefit from an innovative program or service, funds need to be allocated across all regions to support the needs of CALD clients. There should also be due consideration given for ethno-specific group activities and the direct benefits that arise for participants and their carers"
(Table 2.5 on pp22-3 Survey Report).

2. Additional background information provided by eccv

One of the main challenges faced by older people from culturally diverse backgrounds is how to better access HACC services as well as their lack of up-to-date knowledge about health and ageing.

About 40 per cent of people over 65 are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Victoria. In some local council areas they represent up to 50 to 60 per cent.

Ethno-specific PAGs are cost-effective as they:

- Provide more than a social connectedness service
- Deliver education and health information
- Improve access to early intervention HACC services
- Lead to better health and wellbeing in CALD groups

3. Recommendation

The eccv proposes that this innovative ethno-specific PAG model and related social support programs be strengthened and included in future recommendations for HACC Social Support and Respite Services.

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