

## Sustainability of small ethno-specific aged care providers

*ETHNO-SPECIFIC AND MULTICULTURAL AGED CARE PROVIDERS DELIVER VITAL CARE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT TO VICTORIA'S MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY. THEY CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE HEALTHY AGEING OF A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION AND COMPLEMENT AND WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MAINSTREAM SERVICES. THEY HAVE INVALUABLE EXPERTISE IN PROVIDING CARE THAT RESPONDS TO THE CULTURAL, LINGUISTIC, AND SPIRITUAL PREFERENCES AND NEEDS OF OLDER CULTURALLY DIVERSE PEOPLE.*

### Background

*The members of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) have continuously highlighted the importance in preserving ethno-specific aged care services as they are often the first port of call for culturally diverse seniors. ECCV advocates for innovative programs to ensure the organisational sustainability of smaller ethno-specific aged care providers in what is considered a very competitive aged care market. To better understand the issues around sustainability, ECCV consulted with ethno-specific and multicultural aged care providers, particularly Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) providers.*

*This position paper summarises the key findings of our consultations, provides recommendations, and outlines the way forward.*

### Key findings

- A significant proportion of culturally diverse seniors speak little or no English and may revert to their mother tongue as they age.
- ECCV found that often culturally diverse seniors have a preference for ethno-specific and culturally responsive aged care services.
- Victorian ethno-specific aged care providers provide clients with a diversity of choice and culturally responsive services.
- Bilingual and bicultural aged care workers play a key role in ethno-specific agencies in the delivery of culturally responsive care.
- Approximately 60 ethno-specific and multicultural aged care service providers deliver care to culturally diverse seniors in Victoria.
- Ethno-specific and multicultural aged care providers are often the first port of call for culturally diverse seniors and reduce health costs by promoting healthy ageing.
- Ethno-specific aged care providers are working to preserve their unique identity as service providers to their communities.
- There have been significant changes in the Australian aged care landscape including a stronger focus on individualised funding models and moving away from block funding models.

- Ethno-specific CHSP providers have raised concerns about their sustainability beyond June 2020 as some of them rely heavily on the Victorian CHSP block funding.
- Government and community intervention is required to preserve small ethno-specific CHSP providers in a competitive business environment.
- Often new and emerging communities (more recently arrived and refugee communities) lack support and infrastructure to deliver culturally responsive care to their elderly.
- New and emerging communities are looking to the Government for support to help them build their capacity to deliver aged care services.

### **Key ECCV Policy Positions and Recommendations**

Based on our consultation findings, ECCV emphasises that a number of gaps and barriers to equitable aged care for culturally diverse clients remain unaddressed. Improvements to build the capacity of small ethno-specific aged care providers are required to sustain their services to the community and ensure real choice for clients.

1. ECCV recognises the value of ethno-specific aged care providers and their vital importance for their communities.
2. ECCV recommends the establishment of a business incubator to help smaller CHSP providers and recently arrived communities to build their capacity to deliver care to their communities.
3. ECCV highlights that the business incubator would include financial advice, marketing support, sharing of resources, and advice on how to deliver home care successfully.
4. ECCV advocates for Australian and State Government intervention to build the capacity of smaller and community-based ethno-specific aged care providers (particularly CHSP providers).
5. ECCV further advocates for Government regulation to ensure a balance of community-based, not-for-profit, and commercial entities to ensure real choice for clients.
6. ECCV asks aged care provider peak bodies to work with ECCV and ethno-specific and multicultural providers to help ensure their sustainability and hence services to their communities.
7. ECCV advocates that the Australian and Victorian Governments consider the vital role that ethno-specific aged care providers play in terms of Government planning deliberations (E.g. CHSP sector development plans, change management, and the Aged Care Diversity Framework).
8. ECCV advocates for the continuation of block-funding models, especially for the Victorian Access and Support program and Social Support Groups funding.

### **The Way Forward**

The ability to access a variety of care options provided by ethno-specific, mainstream, community-based, not-for-profit, and commercial services is vital to ensure real client choices. Ensuring the availability and accessibility of ethno-specific, multicultural, and culturally responsive aged care services will be paramount to ensure people live and age well.

The Australian and Victorian Governments need to ensure that the Victorian sectorial development and change management strategy and the Australian Government's Diversity Framework make reference to ethno-specific aged care providers. ECCV looks forward to working with the Australian and Victorian Governments and aged care peak bodies to ensure the sustainability of ethno-specific aged care providers.