

Accessibility of Aged Care Services in Regional Victoria

"I HAVE HAD MANY PEOPLE CRYING IN RELIEF WHEN THEY FINALLY GET SOMEONE TO MAKE SENSE OF IT ALL FOR THEM"

ACCESS AND SUPPORT, LATROBE COMMUNITY SERVICES

"WE SUPPORT REFUGEES TO UNDERSTAND AND ACCESS THE SERVICES ON A DAILY BASIS"

ANONYMOUS

Background

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is concerned about the lack of culturally appropriate service options in regional Victoria. The ECCV consulted with its regional members, health providers, and Access and Support workers in regional Victoria to determine service gaps to culturally diverse seniors.

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

Key findings

- Seniors, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds and who live on the Victorian and New South Wales border, are not eligible to access Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) services across the border, which often results in long travel distances.
- There are extensive waitlists to access CHSP services in some areas of regional Victoria and MyAgedCare is not accepting any referrals for domestic assistance in areas such as the Moira Shire.
- Aged care service gaps in regional Victoria affect all older people including those from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- There is a shortage of aged care workers in regional Victoria, for example in the Gippsland area growing home care providers find it difficult to recruit aged care workers.
- There is a shortage of approved home care providers in many parts of regional Victoria, such as the Northern Loddon Mallee region.
- ECCV highlights that often after the conclusion of the assessment and by the time services become available to a client, their needs may have changed significantly.
- There is an extensive waiting list for housing services including emergency accommodation in regional areas, such as in Gippsland.
- Often older culturally diverse people refrain from accessing available services due to the significant difficulties in accessing these services in the first place, including language barriers, issues of trust, and the inability to navigate the service system.

- A growing number of older people from refugee and new and emerging communities continue to settle in regional Victoria but know very little about the aged care system and how to access it.
- The Victorian Access and Support program is key to ensure that older culturally diverse people access aged care services in regional Victoria.

Key ECCV Policy Positions and Recommendations

Based on our consultations' findings, ECCV emphasises that a number of gaps and barriers to equitable aged care for culturally diverse older people in regional Victoria remain unaddressed. Improvements to support culturally diverse older people and their representing organisations to access aged care services are required.

1. ECCV is concerned about the social isolation of culturally diverse older people living in regional Victoria.
2. ECCV highlights that a growing number of culturally diverse older people in regional, rural and remote areas of Victoria need better access to ageing and aged care services.
3. ECCV advocates for an assessment of the accessibility of aged service gaps in regional Victoria to inform the Federal Government's planning considerations on effective regional aged care service delivery.
4. ECCV advocates that both Federal and State Governments commit to the continuation of the Victorian Access and Support program to ensure vulnerable and diverse clients don't miss out on vital support services, including in regional areas.
5. ECCV calls upon the Federal Department of Health to partially regulate aged care service provision and support services (e.g. carers support services) in regional areas to ensure vulnerable people receive appropriate support.
6. ECCV advocates that the Federal and Victorian governments assist providers in regional Victoria to attract, retain, and promote a culturally competent aged care workforce.
7. ECCV highlights the need for increased access to housing services for older culturally diverse people in regional Victoria.
8. ECCV recommends community education to culturally diverse seniors, and ethno-specific and multicultural organisations in regional Victoria to help them better understand My Aged Care registration process and access available aged care services.
9. ECCV suggests that the Federal and Victorian governments assess public transport gaps and the availability of community transport for local residents, including isolated seniors, in regional Victoria.

The Way Forward

The ability to access care is essential for the health and wellbeing of culturally diverse older people living in regional Victoria. ECCV believes that further research is needed to assess service gaps to culturally diverse seniors in regional Victoria. ECCV looks forward to working with Government, research institutes, ethno-specific and multicultural community organisations, health and aged care providers, and peak bodies towards improving access of culturally diverse older people to aged care services in regional Victoria.