

Dear Commissioners,

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) has been working for many years with its members to sustain and enhance the delivery of culturally appropriate aged care services to Victoria's large and rapidly growing ageing culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Our research and consultations identify a number of key issues:

1. Ethno-specific communities face significant challenges in developing aged care services and participating fully within the system.
2. The Productivity Commission, Aged Care Financing Authority, the Aged Care Legislated Review (Tune Report) and the Royal Commission, have all identified the need for innovation and flexibility if current and future challenges to the aged care system are to be met.
3. Aged care consumers clearly desire to remain in their homes for as long as possible and home care is the fastest growing area of funded aged care with demand for HCPs far exceeding supply.
4. Many aspiring (and current) home care providers do not have the resources to deliver viable, compliant and consumer focused programs.
5. While there is a punitive incentive to deliver quality care (Quality and Safety Commission sanctions etc) there are no cogent, comprehensive resource sets or training courses available for communities, organisations or individuals on how to operate a compliant, quality, consumer focused and ethical home care program.
6. There are also limited current resources available for communities or individuals to understand how to assess community needs for home care and how to become aged care Approved Providers.
7. These issues, while of particular importance to ethno-specific communities, are relevant across the sector.

ECCV has been exploring the development of a Sustainable Aged Care Business Incubator (the "Incubator") in partnership with Outcomes Plus (O+). The project aims to support new and prospective ethno-specific and multicultural home care (HCP) and existing CHSP providers. ECCV identified two key elements to the Incubator initiative:

- The first being a back office/mentoring service and ongoing membership for existing providers.
- The second, a program of education and professional development for new and prospective home care providers.

In November 2018, ECCV was funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop and deliver a pilot 16-week professional development programme for new and prospective culturally diverse home care providers.

The project was overseen by a steering committee including both the Victorian and Federal Governments as well as a range of key industry stakeholders.

Eight not-for-profit, ethno-specific and multicultural community organisations (the “incubees”), participated in the program delivered by a range of industry experts. During the course the participants received both education and mentoring on a range of home care business related topics, including but not limited to policies and procedures, quality standards required to deliver consumer focused, ethical and quality compliant care and services. Incubees were also provided with a range of resources such as policies and procedures, assessment tools and quality documents to inform their practice. Additionally, a training module on the Approved Provider application process was developed following requests from the project participants.

“The training gave me confidence that we can do it and do it well” - incubee

On multiple occasions the Incubator participants referred to the training as the benchmark and the gold standard preparation for any provider that is considering aged care (CHSP and HCP) services delivery. The evaluation report (see attached) indicates a high level of satisfaction and knowledge/skills acquisition by incubees.

While the training was delivered to ECCV members, we believe it has a wide potential application across the sector including to generalist and other Special Needs home care providers.

The Incubator model ECCV and O+ are seeking to further develop an educational and preventative model that aims to provide a sound understanding of how home care services meet both the needs of their clients as well as their regulatory obligations in an environment that is highly competitive and rapidly changing. In short, we believe the government should take a proactive approach to “preventing” non-compliance and under-performance by investing in education and mentoring, rather than focusing primarily on “punishing” the non-compliant. (Note: We are not arguing against compliance measures being vigorously applied, rather that it is about balancing prevention and cure.)

“We have the quality but not the business knowledge” - incubee

Furthermore, by assisting ethnic and multicultural organisations to establish successful business practices and be informed of changes and different business opportunities in the aged care sector, the Incubator addresses the risks associated with “thin markets”, where there is limited or no choice or control for consumers.

ECCV and O+ are now looking for support for three initiatives:

1. Based on the learnings from the pilot program, to develop and trial an accredited micro credential training program and associated resource materials.

The Office of the Victorian Skills Commissioner have generously agreed to resource the development and accreditation of this new micro-credential and associated teaching and assessment materials.

2. Develop a mentor based, quality circle and back office support ecosystem for graduates from the training program.

3. Undertake a major refresh of the 2015 “Building Capacity for the Emerging Aged Care Needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities” project to reflect changes to the Aged Care Act and regulatory framework. Key elements of the project were an overview of the aged care system and how communities could plan to meet their needs and a technical manual covering how to apply for Approved Provider status and compete in tenders. (<https://agedcare.health.gov.au/overview/advice-to-the-aged-care-industry/building-capacity-for-the-emerging-aged-care-needs-of-culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-communities>)

ECCV and Outcomes Plus are now seeking funding, including from the federal Department of Health and philanthropic organisations, to resource initiatives 2 and 3 above.

Based on the “prevention vs cure” logic discussed previously, we believe that this project can make a small but important contribution to enhancing the delivery of quality, consumer focused and culturally appropriate care in the home.

We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss the Sustainable Aged Care Business Incubator model and its potential to address the identified sector gaps in more detail. If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact: David Ettershank, Director Outcomes Plus, on david@outcomesplus.com.au | 0418519892 and Gabriele Rukas, Sector Development ECCV, on grukas@eccv.org.au | 0391125021.

Sincerely Yours,

Marion Lau OAM JP
Secretary
Chair, Aged Care Policy Committee
Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria