

Submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality & Safety

Consultation Paper 1: Aged Care Program Redesign: Services for the Future

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria

Submission

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The Voice of Multicultural Victoria

For further information please contact:

Nikolaus Rittinghausen

Senior Policy Officer

nrittinghausen@eccv.org.au

03 9354 9555

Foreword

I am pleased to present the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) Submission on *Aged Care Program Redesign: Services for the Future* to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality & Safety.

Approximately one in three Australian seniors were born overseas, with the majority of these born in non-English speaking countries. Systemic advocacy to benefit senior Victorians from culturally, linguistically, and spiritually diverse communities continues to be a key priority for ECCV.

The submission addresses the following key areas to design an inclusive, equitable, accessible and community-focused ageing and aged care system in Australia:

- Culturally appropriate support;
- Community-based access to information and education;
- Aged care workforce capacity building;
- The Access and Support program in Victoria;
- The Aged Care Navigator Trial;
- Voice and participation of seniors, including from new and emerging communities;
- Capacity building and sustainability of community-based ethno-specific services;
- Targeted Government actions to support seniors in rural and regional areas.

ECCV looks forward to working with the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality & Safety to plan for future ageing programs and services that take into consideration and respond appropriately to the rights, needs, and expectations of Australian seniors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.



24 January 2020

Marion Lau OAM JP

Convenor – ECCV Aged Care Policy Advisory Committee

Secretary – ECCV.

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Introduction

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the peak advocacy body in Victoria for over 220 member organisations, including ethnic and multicultural organisations, and eight regional ethnic community councils across the state. For more than 45 years, we have been advocating for human rights, freedom, respect, equality and dignity for ethnic and multicultural communities, and for the building of a socially cohesive and inclusive Victorian community.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety provides Australia with the unique opportunity to build an aged care system that will reflect the actual diversity of our society and be better suited to face our changing demographics. In this regard, it is important to remember that not only is the Australian population ageing,¹ but that new waves of migration are shaping an increase in ethnic and cultural diversity amongst our senior population.

ECCV considers that building a person-centred aged care system in twenty first century Australia requires government and service providers to shift the lens through which the ideal 'user/consumer' is imagined. We need social policies and systems that acknowledge upfront that we are a multicultural society and, consequently, are designed to be culturally responsive.

ECCV is pleased to see that the 'Aged Care Program Redesign: Service for the Future' Consultation Paper 1 affirms the need to pay closer attention to the 'philosophy that should underpin the aged care system', moving away from the transactional view of aged care as a marketplace and seniors as consumers, to emphasise relationships of care. As ECCV has constantly heard from seniors, they want to be acknowledged as full citizens, with their needs, identity, culture and rights respected.

While ECCV understands the limited scope of the Consultation Paper, *it highlights that any future decision around redesign must be preceded by a larger discussion that integrates the system stewardship, provider governance, market development, and workforce development.* As various major social policy reforms have taught us, addressing these issues as an integral part of the design stage will help prevent a series of mistakes around assumptions and capacity for implementation that ultimately determine the success of any reform.

The recent review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013², for instance, provided valuable insights onto how assumptions on how people would exercise choice and control have often contrasted with a reality of diverse needs and ability to engage with a complex system, and in which the balancing of individual independence and collective (family, community) considerations is influenced by many factors, including cultural background.

ECCV is pleased to make this submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and hopes that our responses to the Discussion Paper will assist in designing an aged care system

¹ Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, 'Medium and long term pressures on the system: The changing demographics and dynamics of aged care,' Background paper 2, May 2019, <https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/Documents/background-paper-2.pdf>

² David Tune AO PSM, 'Removing red tape and implementing the NDIS Participant Service Guarantee', Review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013, December 2019, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2020/ndis-act-review-final-accessibility-and-prepared-publishing1.pdf

that provides genuine choice for Australian seniors, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Question 8 highlights that “caring for people with diverse needs and in all parts of Australia has to be core business – not an afterthought.” In 2016, one in three older people were born overseas and the majority of these were born in non-English speaking countries.³ Culturally and linguistically diverse seniors are increasingly expecting that the Australian aged care system will appropriately meet their individual rights and needs.

Question 1: What are your views on the principles for a new system, set out on page 4 of this paper?

ECCV welcomes the clear formulation of a set of overarching principles that should guide the aged care system and be valid for all its programs. In fact, most of these principles already guide aged care programs and have been acknowledged as part of the Charter of Aged Care Rights.

While there is little contention over the Principles, during the ECCV consultation with the members of its Aged Care Policy Committee, the issue of interpretation of meaning was raised. Equally, given the importance that stated principles have as pillars for the system, it was suggested the explicit inclusion of respect for cultural diversity amongst principles.

Recommendations

1. The Principles include ‘having an individual’s identity, culture and diversity valued and supported’. This will align them with the Charter of Aged Care Rights and ensure that this right is not placed as secondary consideration in interpretations of equity, choice, dignity, and individual needs; and
2. ‘Training’ be added to enabling recruitment and retention, as that is a core link for the development, upskilling and maintenance of a quality workforce.

Question 2: How could we ensure that any redesign of the aged care system makes it simpler for older people to find and receive the care and supports that they need?

ECCV defined what ethno-specific and culturally appropriate care is in its 2014 Multicultural Aged Care Strategy.⁴ Key characteristics of ethno-specific and culturally appropriate care can include:

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2018, *Older Australia at a Glance*, available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-people/older-australia-at-a-glance/contents/demographics-of-older-australians/culturally-linguistically-diverse-people> (Accessed on 22 January 2020).

⁴ ECCV, 2014, *Multicultural Aged Care Strategy*, available at: https://eccv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/6-ECCVs_Multicultural_Aged_Care_Strategy.pdf

- Same language services;
- Cultural and spiritual care;
- Employment of bilingual staff;
- Culturally specific dementia and palliative care;
- Culturally sensitive aged care assessment;
- Culturally appropriate food;
- Partnerships with ethno-specific and multicultural community groups and organisations.

ECCV advocates for an Australian aged care system that takes into consideration the distinct preferences and needs of seniors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Based on ECCV findings, this can be best achieved through:

1. Culturally appropriate support from ethno-specific and multicultural ageing and aged care organisations and mainstream services;
2. Community-based access to information and education about the Australian aged care system; and
3. Capacity building of the Australian aged care workforce to recruit and maintain bilingual staff.

Culturally appropriate support

The Monash University-ECCV study on the delivery of community aged care services to ethnic groups titled *Mainstream Versus Ethno-Specific Services: It's Not an 'Either Or'*⁵ emphasised that ethno-specific services are a vital component of aged care service delivery.

The study came to the conclusion that “the literature offers abundant evidence to support the value and effectiveness of ethno-specific services for CALD people, while at the same time emphasising the inability for ethno-specific agencies alone to respond to the needs of all of Australia’s ethnic communities, and in particular smaller groups”⁶. The study also suggested that an effective approach to deliver aged care services for seniors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is forming good partnerships between mainstream, multicultural and ethno-specific service providers.

ECCV argues that ethno-specific and culturally appropriate aged care providers have invaluable expertise in supporting culturally diverse seniors to find appropriate care options, linking them into the aged care service system, and providing care that meets the needs and preferences of culturally diverse seniors.

⁵ Radermacher, Harriet; Feldman, Susan; Browning, Collette, 2008, Review of Literature Concerning the Delivery of Community Aged Care Services to Ethnic Groups – *Mainstream Versus Ethno-Specific Services: It's Not an 'Either Or'*, Prepared for the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria and Partners.

⁶ Radermacher, Harriet; Feldman, Susan; Browning, Collette, 2008, Review of Literature Concerning the Delivery of Community Aged Care Services to Ethnic Groups – *Mainstream Versus Ethno-Specific Services: It's Not an 'Either Or'*, Prepared for the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria and Partners.

To ensure better access to the aged care system by culturally and linguistically diverse seniors, ECCV highlights the need for:

- Culturally appropriate support to help culturally diverse seniors enter the Australian aged care system, particularly through face to face linkage services;
- Investment to enable ethno-specific and multicultural organisations to fund activities that help culturally diverse seniors to navigate and access the aged care system;
- Training and support for providers on how to deliver culturally appropriate care.

Recommendation

- 3.** ECCV recommends that the Australian Government develop guidelines for partnerships between large service providers and community-based organisations, such as ethno-specific and multicultural community organisations, to ensure partnerships in aged care are *mutually beneficial and financially sustainable*.

Community-based access to information and education

ECCV consulted with members of the Aged Care Policy Committee on the aged care program redesign. The Committee consists of ethno-specific, multicultural, and mainstream aged care service providers, culturally diverse seniors' clubs, and aged care sector organisations. Consultation participants suggested a more community-based and community-oriented provision of information, and emphasised location (e.g. libraries, general practitioners, supermarkets, shopping centres) and diversified forms of communication (face to face, audio-visual resources, online) as critical for effective access. The Committee members also cited the need for simple, independent and comprehensive information to be delivered as early as possible as people age, so that they can enter the system with more knowledge and make informed choices.

Information should be provided in language, easy English, and include audio visual media, podcasts and radio conversations. A successful example for multilingual information provision in aged care and targeted messaging to culturally and linguistically diverse seniors is the *Speak My Language* project.

The *Speak My Language Project*⁷ is a program that provides multilingual information about healthy ageing to culturally and linguistically diverse seniors. Through this project, community radio stations inform culturally and linguistically diverse communities about the Commonwealth's aged care system. The project has been managed by the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW, ECCV, ECCQ and SBS and the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council.

⁷ See the Ethnic Communities' Council of New South Wales, <http://www.eccnsw.org.au/What-we-do/Speak-My-Language.aspx>

In view of the comments received and ECCV experience with information delivery to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, a community-based model of information provision seems to be the most effective way to:

- Allow for open conversations about aged services and other resources in the community;
- Develop knowledge and understanding of the system and the services will build confidence and enable better articulation of the needs at the initial stage;
- Help people to make an informed decision about what type of service, care, program is most suitable to their needs;
- Gain knowledge about the variety of local service providers and how to find and contact them and what their business reputation is;
- Provide short and simple information, including in community languages on available services options, how to access them, and the aged care system more broadly.

Ethnic seniors' groups connect seniors with support services

Based on Victorian Government figures, there are approximately 900 registered ethnic senior citizens groups in Victoria.⁸ Ethnic seniors' clubs and groups are facilitating the delivery of information about government services in a culturally sensitive manner. The ECCV *Discussion Paper on Ethnic Seniors' Clubs and Groups*⁹ has found that many ethnic seniors' clubs run programs and are a forum for peer-to-peer advice and assistance about self-care issues. Guest speakers may also provide information about topics of interest to club members.

Clubs also provide support to members to fill out forms for Medicare, the Multi-Purpose Tax Program, Seniors Cards, forms for doctors, legal issues and the like. Form-filling can be very technical and difficult for all seniors, but again it is particularly challenging for those with limited English skills. Ethnic seniors' clubs also provide a valuable service in helping to raise awareness and confront important but often under-reported issues, such as elder abuse. Ethnic seniors' clubs are therefore often a valuable source of information that can make a substantial difference to the health and quality of life of a significant group of Australians.

Recommendation

- 4.** ECCV recommends that the Australian Government adopts a community-based model of information provision about aged care services. ECCV suggests that information be provided by bilingual and bicultural staff through community centres, local councils, multicultural peak bodies and community organisations, and via ethnic and multicultural seniors' groups.

⁸ Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2019, Honouring Our multicultural citizens, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, available at: <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/honouring-our-multicultural-senior-citizens/> (Accessed on 22 January 2020)

⁹ ECCV, 2018, Ethnic Seniors' Clubs and Groups – Planning for the future of seniors group in Victoria, available at: https://eccv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ECCV_Discussion_Paper_Ethnic_Seniors_Clubs_and_Groups_FEB2018.pdf

Aged care workforce capacity building

ECCV emphasises that culturally and linguistically diverse seniors find it difficult to access aged care services by themselves because:

- They revert to their mother tongue as they age;
- They have literacy issues (English language literacy and literacy in their own language);
- They are often not very familiar with the concept of institutionalised care for older people;
- There is limited availability of ethno-specific and culturally appropriate services.

Bilingual staff enable and facilitate communication with seniors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. However, the ability to speak a language other than English and cultural expertise is still not recognised as a valuable professional skill.¹⁰ Considering the increase in ethnic and cultural diversity amongst our seniors, ECCV suggests more investment in the expansion of a multilingual aged care workforce, which could include bilingual and bi-cultural skills, and training to effectively interact with culturally, linguistically and spiritually diverse seniors.

Recommendation

5. ECCV recommends the commissioning of a scoping study on the economic and social impact of increase in recruitment, retention, and foreign language skills recognition of Australia's bilingual and bi-cultural aged care workforce.

Question 3: What is the best model for delivery of the services as the entry point to the aged care system – considering the importance of the first contact that older people have with the system? This includes looking at services provided by phone and website as well as face-to-face services.

Face to face information and assistance to navigate services, including assertive outreach in metropolitan and regional areas are essential for people to age healthily, and helps prevent premature access to high care. It is important that the aged care system offers diverse access. In order to be effective, face-to-face services need to be sensitive to the cultural, linguistic, and faith needs of the person. For ethnically and culturally diverse seniors, this includes access to trusted, community-based assessment services, interpreting and translating services, and bilingual care and staff who speak the client's language.

¹⁰ ECCV 2016, Ageing Portfolio Papers, Sheet 4: Aged Care workforce, available at: https://eccv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Ageing_Portfolio_Booklet_NOV2016.pdf (Accessed on 22 January 2020)

The Access and Support program in Victoria

Over a number of years, the Victorian *Access and Support* program has succeeded in delivering vital outreach and navigation services to the growing number of vulnerable clients and linking them up with services. As a specialised support service, Access and Support is *impartial* and not limited to the clients and catchment area of their auspice organisation. The Access and Support program assists a great number of individuals and their carers who, due to their diversity, find it difficult to access necessary services.

Access and Support staff engage in the following activities:

- Identify individuals in need, explaining the aged care service system through assertive outreach;
- Work with the service system, including with assessors and aged care services, when required;
- Support clients through the *My Aged Care* pathway: Access to My Aged Care and screening, Regional Assessment Services (RAS) or Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) assessments and linking with appropriate services.¹¹

ECCV has received feedback that with the number of reforms and systems to navigate, including aged care, disability, mental health amongst others, the time staff allocates for each client has also increased:

“If clients don’t have trust, they won’t show up. Trust requires time”
(Access and Support worker)

Currently, the Access and Support program is hosted by a range of agencies, including local government, community health services, hospitals, advocacy organisations, ethno-specific service and information agencies. One of the most valued aspects of the service is its impartiality. This is of great significance when building relationships and trust with clients, assessment services, service providers and advocacy organisations. Where an A&S worker is hosted by an aged care service provider a conflict of interest situation may arise. Therefore A&S programs should be delivered by organisations separated from service providers, and alongside assessment services. The A&S is supported by sectoral support and development roles who are key in building capacity across the aged care sector, maintain partnerships, and facilitate service innovation.

Recommendation

6. ECCV recommends that the Australian Government continues to provide block funding to existing, well-functioning state-specific support programs, such as the Access and Support program in Victoria and state-based sector support roles, to complement federal aged care programs.

¹¹ ECCV 2019, *Access and Support service – it’s all about the gaps and client outcomes*. Position paper, <https://eccv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Gab-ECCV-position-paper.pdf>

The Aged Care Navigator Trial

Initially, the Aged Care Navigator Trial was aimed at servicing all senior Australians, including individuals from the nine special needs groups (Aged Care Act 1997). Currently the Trial, heavily reliant on unpaid work and little or no outreach, risks excluding the most vulnerable and isolated seniors in our communities. ECCV considers that assertive outreach and targeted, customised service responses are essential to effectively address the *diversity within diversity* of the Australian population to ensure genuine *choice and control* for clients. ECCV underlines the risk of people ‘falling through the cracks’ due to:

- Lack of familiarity of or knowledge to navigate the service system;
- Lack of trust in the service system;
- Limited English language and literacy;
- Social isolation and experience of trauma
- Mental health issues.

Recommendation

- 7.** ECCV recommends that the Australian Government continues to fund the Victorian Access and Support program and use it as a reference for the design of future navigation programs.

Question 8: Caring for people with diverse needs and in all parts of Australia has to be core business – not an afterthought. How should the design of the future aged care system take into account the needs of diverse groups and in regional and remote locations?

ECCV is pleased to see the Commission’s commitment to embed diversity into the design from the outset, avoiding a one sizes fits all approach. As indicated in the Introduction, while ECCV understands that it is out of the scope of this Consultation Paper to cover in detail all aspects of the system, for diversity to become core business in the Australian aged care, issues of market development, governance and workforce development should be an integral part of the system design.

Here ECCV highlights three aspects that should guide the design, with a focus on ethnic and cultural diversity. ECCV recognises, however, that other forms of diversity are also important, and it calls on the Australian Government to pay attention to those individual or group characteristics that are likely to constitute a vulnerability or disadvantage for seniors accessing the aged care system.

Voice and participation of seniors, including from new and emerging communities

The Aged Care Diversity Framework ('Diversity Framework')¹² is a welcome step towards the consolidation of a human rights, person centred approach in aged care, which aims "to embed diversity in the design and delivery of aged care," so that the barriers of access to safe, equitable, and quality care can be addressed. While the Diversity Framework complements the Aged Care Quality Standards, it is a non-binding document. The realisation of its potential will therefore depend on its full incorporation into every action and initiative that impacts on policies for our seniors.

In line with the Diversity Framework, ECCV recommends that the Australian Government work closely with community organisations, ethnic seniors clubs and culturally diverse community members to ensure that aged care services understand and respond to their concerns. Collaboration can range from more simple forms, such as consultations, to more innovative opportunities for culturally diverse seniors and groups to help co-design the services they want. Regardless of the mechanism, ensuring diverse voices across various ethnic communities is also vital.

Members of the ECCV Aged Care Policy Committee have repeatedly expressed concerns over the lack of culturally responsive aged care services to new and emerging communities, such as for seniors from Middle Eastern, Latin American, African, and South Asian communities. Seniors from new and emerging communities experience additional barriers to access aged care services in Australia¹³ due to many factors, including language limitations, services providers' low understanding of the cultural norms and practices, migration related traumatic experiences, and challenges associated with service eligibility.

"A challenge for older African Australians to access aged care services is that often people's biological age does not reflect the age shown in official identification documents. Given that the eligibility age for aged care services in Australia is generally 65, some older African Australians are missing out on aged care services due to inaccurate identification."

African Think Tank 2019 Conference Report¹⁴

¹² Department of Health, 2017. *Aged Care Diversity Framework*. Aged Care Sector Committee Diversity Sub-group, p. 2, available at:

https://agedcare.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/04_2018/aged_care_diversity_framework.pdf (Accessed on 21 January 2020)

¹³ National Seniors Australia, 2018, *Dealing with Diversity: Aged care services for new and emerging communities*, available at: <https://nationalseniors.com.au/uploads/07183049PAR-DealingWithDiversity-ResearchReport-Web.pdf> (Accessed on 22 January 2020).

¹⁴ African Think Tank, 2019, *African Australians Settlement and Integration 2030: Opportunities and Challenges*, Conference, 12-13 November, page 34, available at: https://274c51a1-95a4-4170-b997-db0847ac80a5.filesusr.com/ugd/34e58b_bb1c442062d04582b4c12ed0010c00a8.pdf (Accessed on 22 January 2020)

Recommendation

8. ECCV recommends that the Australian Government ensures that aged care programs are designed with the participation of community-based, ethnic and multicultural organisations, culturally diverse seniors' groups, and communities, including members from new and emerging communities.

Capacity building and sustainability of community-based ethno-specific services

Ethno-specific and multicultural organisations are essential in addressing community needs and fill mainstream service gaps in the community, as they:

- Provide culturally appropriate services that support ageing well
- Deliver services through community partnerships and close relationships with their communities
- Provide quality care which meets the linguistic, cultural, and spiritual needs of older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The implementation of national and state reforms to ageing and aged care in Victoria have overall resulted in a more 'market-driven' system. ECCV has observed¹⁵ that these reforms have often favoured larger providers which have more resources available to build internal business capacity and adapt to continuous policy changes. Victoria has more than 50 ethno-specific and multicultural Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) providers. These organisations primarily see themselves as responsible to service their communities and as 'businesses with a purpose.' The 2016 ECCV project report¹⁶ on 'Exploring Sustainable Business Models for Victorian Ethnic & Multicultural Aged Care' found that ethnic and multicultural organisations play a distinct role in the delivery of aged and community care. However, for the smaller organisations, sustainability in a highly competitive market and changing funding model is a challenge.

ECCV has recognised a great need to support and upskill ethnic providers to manage the change and focus on business sustainability. Despite a myriad of reforms and changes there is no training or long-term incentives offered by the Australian Government to ensure that smaller ethno-specific providers can sustain their vital support services to older culturally and linguistically diverse community members.¹⁷

¹⁵ ECCV, 2016, Exploring Sustainable Business models for Victorian Ethnic & Multicultural Aged Care – Project Report, available at: https://eccv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ECCV-Sustainable-project-final-report_-9Nov16-Compressed-ilovepdf-compressed-3.pdf (Accessed on 22 January 2020)

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ ECCV, 2019, Submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, available on <https://eccv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Submission-to-the-Royal-Commission-into-Aged-Care-Quality-and-Safety-Sustainable-Aged-Care-Business-Incubator.pdf> (Accessed on 22 January 2020)

The ECCV *Aged Care Business Incubator* project pilot is an example of a well-designed capacity building initiative to strengthen small ethno-specific organisations to develop and strengthen aged care services to their community members. It helps to ensure client access to culturally appropriate and customised services.

Through the *Aged Care Business Incubator*, ECCV, in partnership with Outcomes Plus, facilitated training and one-to-one support to eight smaller ethno-specific organisations on the delivery of home care, rostering, marketing, IT systems, HR and management and compliance issues. Participating organisations have benefitted through building their organisational capacity to sustain their aged care services into the future.

A specific focus of the ECCV *Sustainable Aged Care Business Incubator's* project pilot was to develop and deliver an intensive Home Care Provider Education training program, during which the participating ethno-specific and multicultural agencies familiarised themselves with it means to run a sustainable and ethical aged care business.

“Training undergone has given me more understanding and clarity of homecare packages, the policies and procedures, knowledge of quality standards and compliance plus the level of standard that all organisations should hold themselves accountable to”

Ethno-specific provider

Recommendation

9. ECCV recommends that the Australian Government allocates resources to:
 - a. support small ethnic and multicultural organisations to sustain their operations and provide tailored aged care services;
 - b. build the capacity of community organisations from new and emerging communities, particularly the small ones, to operate as aged care providers.

Targeted Government actions to support seniors in rural and regional areas

In 2019 ECCV engaged in consultations in regional Victoria on the social and cultural participation of culturally diverse seniors in regional Victoria. The ECCV consultation found that limited access to transport and social isolation impact significantly on the health and wellbeing of seniors and their social groups in regional Victoria. In dealing with isolation, culturally diverse seniors' groups were considered a central part in the social life of seniors living in regional areas, as they help them to remain active and socially and culturally connected. Members of seniors' groups also mentioned that they have relied on financial co-contributions to provide transport for members to participate in planned activities, help people to attend medical appointments, and visit isolated peers in residential care.

Ensuring that seniors in rural and regional areas are able to access adequate social support, choose services that are safe, high quality and culturally appropriate, and remain as much as possible, connected socially, is part of the necessary investment Governments have to do to ensure a healthy, dignifying ageing experience. Given the problems generated by thin markets in rural and regional

areas, it is fundamental that the Australian Government designs solutions that are able to address the expected gaps. The geographical and demographic reality of rural and regional areas means that it is unlikely that seniors, especially from ethnic and culturally diverse backgrounds, will be able to exercise the same level of choice as those living in metropolitan areas. Consequently, it is important that Government intervention helps steer the aged care system, including service providers, to uphold the same quality standards in rural and regional areas. At the same time, ensuring seniors can celebrate their identity and culture in community spaces is a relatively low investment that can bring considerable benefits in terms of health and positive ageing in rural and regional areas.

Recommendation

10. ECCV recommends that the Australian Government takes leadership in addressing thin markets in rural and regional areas, and ensure that high quality, safe and culturally appropriate aged care services are available, and that seniors can experience a healthy, dignifying ageing, regardless of where they live.

Conclusion

ECCV notes that effective service delivery to seniors from culturally diverse backgrounds will depend on:

- The Government's capacity to intervene where there are service gaps
- Stronger recognition and appropriate funding of ethno-specific and multicultural organisations - including for new and emerging communities - which complement mainstream services
- Culturally appropriate mainstream services to meet the expectations of Australia's older multicultural population
- Flexibility of the aged care sector to capitalise on the bilingual skills of care workers and appropriate remuneration
- The Government's commitment to existing, well-functioning State-based best practice, particularly the Access and Support program and sector support and development in Victoria, to complement federal aged care programs.

ECCV is committed to ensure that the rights, preferences, and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities and their seniors are appropriately considered in the design and considerations for the future delivery of aged care services. We look forward to working with the Australian and Victorian governments towards a fair, equitable, and accessible aged care system through the program's redesign.