



# Elder abuse in care relationships:

Key learnings from the  
*Recognising and Respecting Carers  
from CALD Backgrounds* project

ETHNIC COMMUNITIES' COUNCIL OF VICTORIA  
September 2023



## About ECCV

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the peak body for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in Victoria. ECCV works closely with more than 220 member organisations including ethnic associations, multicultural service providers, and regional ethnic communities' councils. ECCV has been advocating for human rights, freedom, respect, equality and dignity for migrant and refugee communities, and for a socially cohesive and inclusive Victorian community, since 1974. ECCV has a strong record of informing industry, practice and influencing Federal, State and Local governments to promote culturally responsive approaches and equitable access to services, anti-racism and socially just policy.

## A note on language

The term 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (and its abbreviation 'CALD') is used in this document to refer to people and communities who have entered Australia through a variety of pathways, including through humanitarian, family, and skilled migration pathways. The term refers to people with backgrounds and ancestry that is not part of the dominant Anglo-Celtic Australian population. This term is inclusive of people seeking asylum in Australia, people on temporary visas, undocumented migrants, and people born in Australia.

## Suggested citation

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) (2023). *Elder abuse in care relationships: Key learnings from the Recognising and Respecting Carers from CALD Backgrounds project*. Melbourne, Australia.

## Acknowledgements

ECCV would like to gratefully acknowledge our stakeholders for providing consultation feedback and sharing their insights and expertise. We would particularly like to acknowledge Carers Victoria and the Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre for sharing their insights during the preparation of this submission. We thank the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing for its funding of the *Recognising and Respecting Carers from CALD Backgrounds* project.



The *Recognising and Respecting Carers from CALD Backgrounds* project was funded by the Victorian Government.



ECCV acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay respect to their Elders past and present.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b><i>Recognising and Respecting Carers</i> project – methodology and activities</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Our reflections and current state of knowledge</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Elder Abuse in CALD communities.....	<b>6</b>
CALD Carers and Elder Abuse .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Project Findings and Learnings</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Challenges and enablers in accessing support</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Language and digital literacy .....	<b>13</b>
Culture and religion .....	<b>13</b>
Gender .....	<b>13</b>
Intersectionality .....	<b>14</b>
Data collection .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Supporting CALD carers</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Case study: Afghan Community Group.....	<b>17</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>18</b>

# Introduction

This paper provides an overview of the challenges, learnings and current gaps in practice related to discussions and responses to the issue of elder abuse in care relationships where the carer and/or care recipient is from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background.

Although the prevalence of elder abuse is similar in migrant and refugee communities to what it is in the mainstream population, it can present differently due to different cultural norms, stigma, language barriers, and a lack of awareness of the issue. These factors can also present barriers to accessing support.

Although elder abuse is most often committed by a family member, it can also occur in institutional, service and care settings. As Victoria's population grows and steadily ages, the incidence of elder abuse is also likely to increase, including in care relationships. However, abuse in care relationships is rarely given the same level of consideration as abuse that is classified as family violence.

Combatting elder abuse among carers in CALD communities requires a particularly targeted approach, given the differing ways in which care relationships are perceived. To work towards healthier, more respectful care relationships, it is necessary to work with CALD communities to identify people who perform caring roles and, talk to them about the importance of seeking support and link them to support services. Carers who do not receive proper support run the risk of suffering burnout and stress, and it is in these situations that the risk of elder abuse, often inadvertent, is heightened.

# ***Recognising and Respecting Carers from CALD Backgrounds* project – methodology and activities**

From July 2021 to June 2023, ECCV partnered with Carers Victoria to deliver the *Recognising and Respecting Carers from CALD Backgrounds* project [hereafter referred to as the *Recognising and Respecting Carers* project] to improve outcomes for carers from CALD backgrounds by addressing priorities set out by the Victorian Government in the *Victorian Carer Strategy 2018-22*. These priorities ensure that carers:

- Are healthy and well
- Are engaged in education, employment and community
- Can access respite and other supports they need
- Have less financial stress
- Are recognised, acknowledged and respected.

The project provided timely insights about elder abuse in CALD care relationships from a community engagement perspective, with a particular focus on older carers.

The *Recognising and Respecting Carers* project aimed to improve outcomes for carers from CALD backgrounds through:

- Engaging with and supporting CALD carer support group leaders
- Raising awareness of elder abuse in care relationships among CALD carer support group leaders
- Raising awareness of issues affecting carers within the broader CALD community, including identifying hidden carers and elder abuse in carer relationships.

An Advisory Group was established to provide critical advice to ECCV on the implementation and evaluation of the project, share expertise, resources and knowledge, provide evidence-based expert insight into elder abuse prevention, assist in developing relevant publications, primary research and consultation findings, and contribute to the development of sustainable partnerships beyond the life of the project. The Advisory Group included representatives from:

- Seniors Rights Victoria
- Carers Victoria
- City of Melbourne
- Merri Health
- Bendigo Health/Carer Gateway
- Neighbourhood Houses Network West
- Financial Counselling Victoria

Target groups were identified through consultations with members of the Advisory Group, existing ECCV community networks and relationships with CALD seniors' groups, and introductory meetings with organisations funded to run activities or provide services to carers from CALD backgrounds, including: Brimbank City Council, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Merri Health, City of Melbourne, City of Melton, and Springvale Neighbourhood House.

The following criteria was developed for identifying appropriate groups:

- Identified as ethno-specific or multicultural
- Carers over 65 years or caring for people over 65 years
- Existing carer support group or potential new group
- Existing seniors' group with carers as members

The engagement process started by undertaking phone calls, emails, and online meetings. Group leaders were given a detailed description on the project and its goals and how carers would benefit from participating in it. Group leaders then discussed the proposal with their members, gauging interest and confirming their participation. A critical component of this engagement work was the time needed to build trust with group leaders and group members alike. This required several conversations and meetings with groups across the board.

A Needs Assessment Tool was developed for ECCV to conduct a needs analysis for each group. This was used to develop a strategy to build their capacity, and tailor the response according to their needs.

A total of 62 sessions were delivered to organisations from the following communities:

- Spanish (15 sessions)
- Afghan (14)
- Arabic (13)
- Chinese (7)
- Turkish (5)
- Greek (5)
- Japanese (2)
- Vietnamese (1)

Three additional sessions for groups of mixed ethnicities were run in collaboration with South Migrant and Refugee Centre, Delta Neighbourhood Learning Centre, Dandenong North Neighbourhood Centre and Action on Disability in Ethnic Communities.

ECCV's approached use its strong links with multicultural communities and bicultural workers to identify target groups. Prospective carer group leaders were provided with an overview of the Project. These group leaders were invited to brief their group members about being involved in the project. ECCV interviewed group leaders from the participating carer groups. The Needs Assessment Tool was then used to identify and assess carer needs.

ECCV worked to identify hidden carers, connect them to support services and build their capacities. We also coordinated tailored respite activities and, through partnerships with external subject matter experts such as Victoria Police and Peninsula Community Legal Centre, delivered workshops on a range of other topics, including:

- Organisational governance
- Legal rights covering subjects such as wills, powers of attorney and guardianship
- My Aged Care
- Using public transport
- Digital literacy

English classes were also provided where necessary.

Through this relationship-building process, sensitive issues such as elder abuse were introduced, and referrals for support offered.

ECCV also receives funding to deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate information sessions to raise awareness of elder abuse among CALD communities in Victoria. As part of the *Recognising and Respecting Carers* project, ECCV identified potential carer group leaders to become bilingual community educators (BCEs) in its *Raising Awareness of Elder Abuse in Ethnic Communities* project. Two such leaders were identified and agreed to undergo training to become bilingual community educators.

This paper summarises learnings from the *Recognising and Respecting Carers* project, including how supporting carers can minimise the risk of elder abuse, and ways in which the project enabled other benefits for supporting CALD carers.

# Our reflections and current state of knowledge

## Elder Abuse in CALD communities

Elder abuse is often a form of family violence, but also occurs in institutional, service and care settings. Elder abuse can take the forms of:

- Financial abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Social abuse
- Sexual abuse

An Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) study estimated that 14.8% of people aged 65 and over had experienced elder abuse in the previous year.<sup>1</sup> The most common forms of elder abuse were reported to be psychological abuse (11.7%), neglect (2.9%), financial abuse (2.1%), physical abuse (1.8%) and sexual abuse (1%). In the study, 3.5% of participants reported experiencing multiple types of abuse, with the most common combinations being psychological abuse and neglect.

Research suggests that the main drivers of elder abuse relate to norms, beliefs, and values around how society relates to ageing and older people. Other drivers stem from structural factors such as poverty, unemployment, social isolation, intergenerational conflict, shifting family roles and dynamics, and lack of informal support systems and access to resources.<sup>2</sup> There are however still many gaps in our knowledge about the underlying drivers, associated risk factors and impacts of elder abuse, and the contexts in which it occurs. The *National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians 2019–2023* identified that specific attention should be paid to the needs of older people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, who may experience elder abuse in ways that differ from the Anglo-Australian population and other, more established communities.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Qu, L., Kaspiew, R., Carson, R., Roopani, D., De Maio, J., Harvey, J., Horsfall, B. (2021). *National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study: Final Report*. (Research Report). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. <https://aifs.gov.au/projects/national-elder-abuseprevalence-study>

<sup>2</sup> Warburton J, Bartlett H, & Rao V. (2009). Ageing and cultural diversity: Policy and practice issues. *Australian Social Work*, 62(2), 168-85

<sup>3</sup> Council of Attorneys-General (2019). *National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019-2023*. <https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/publications/national-plan-respond-abuse-older-australians-elder-abuse-2019-2023>



A 2016 inquiry into elder abuse in New South Wales highlighted that older people from CALD backgrounds are at greater risk of abuse due to factors including limited English skills, social isolation, dependency on family members, unwillingness to disclose abuse because of stigma, and cross-generational factors resulting in different expectations of care and support.<sup>4</sup>

However, research into how elder abuse is understood and experienced in migrant and refugee communities is largely lacking. What evidence there currently exists has not focused on the intersections of family and cultural norms, disability, gender, and immigration status. Understanding culturally specific issues related to elder abuse is critical to the design of culturally appropriate prevention and intervention strategies.

Cultural variations also influence how people report or seek help for elder abuse, and this can make elder abuse difficult to identify and address. For example, in some cultures the admission of a family member to residential aged care might be seen as elder abuse. Tailored policy and program responses are therefore necessary to identify, respond to and ultimately prevent elder abuse in CALD communities. The most effective responses are those delivered by trained bicultural workers, who have the cultural and linguistic expertise needed to engage effectively with their communities.

The AIFS study found that the prevalence rate of elder abuse in CALD communities was 15.3%, which does not differ significantly from the rate for the general population. However, elder abuse can often present differently in CALD communities due to differing cultural norms, stigma, language barriers, and a lack of awareness of the issue. In CALD communities, elder abuse can be linked to differing cultural perceptions of what constitutes abuse, tolerance of certain types of abuse, and reluctance to report abuse.<sup>5</sup> There may be conflicts between generations about the extent to which children are expected to care for their elderly parents.<sup>6</sup>

Dependence and social isolation can also be drivers of elder abuse in CALD communities, particularly where an older person has limited English language proficiency, and where they are reliant on family members for everyday care and social and financial support. Family relationships can be particularly important for people who are isolated from mainstream society due to a language barrier.

People from CALD backgrounds often face additional barriers to disclosing and addressing abuse. Key barriers include stigma, lack of awareness<sup>7</sup> (people from CALD backgrounds may not be aware

---

<sup>4</sup> NSW Parliament, General Purpose Standing Committee (2016). Inquiry into Elder abuse in New South Wales (Report No. 44). <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2387/Report%2044%20-%20Elder%20abuse%20in%20New%20South%20Wales.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Lai, D., Daoust G., & Li L. (2014). Understanding elder abuse and neglect in aging Chinese immigrants in Canada. *The Journal of Adult Protection*, 16(5), 322-334.

<sup>6</sup> Walsh, C. A., Ploeg, J., Lohfeld, L., Horne, J., Macmillan, H., & Lai, D. (2007). Violence across the lifespan: Interconnections among forms of abuse as described by marginalized Canadian elders and their care-givers. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 37, 491-514.

<sup>7</sup> Bagshaw, D., Wendt, S., & Zannettino, L. (2007). Our actions to prevent the abuse of older South Australians. Action plan (based on research). South Australia: Office for the Ageing, Department for Families and Communities.

when they are victims of elder abuse), and the cultural competency of available services. Services in Australia often have an individualist mindset that assumes individuals will be comfortable reporting abuse.

Older people are often reliant on a family member or carer for translations and interpreting, financial transactions, and to access both in-person and online services. This creates a power imbalance that can create the circumstances in which abuse occurs.

## CALD Carers and Elder Abuse

Carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and/or friends with a disability, mental illness, chronic health issue or an older person with care needs. They exist in all communities, but they are often “hidden” or unrecognised in CALD communities. This is because many carers do not identify as such, and the relationship is not seen as being one of “caring” in the western sense, by either the carer or the care recipient. In many non-Western cultures, looking after one’s older relatives is commonly seen simply as one of life’s responsibilities, and not something for which special assistance or financial compensation should be sought. Many languages do not have a word that translates as “carer”, since caring for family members is presumed to be part of the family role.

Supporting carers from CALD backgrounds to access appropriate services and support therefore requires a conception of how caring is understood in different communities. It also requires an understanding of the additional barriers that CALD carers face in performing their roles and accessing support, which will be examined below.

Supporting CALD carer wellbeing requires a targeted approach to address these barriers. As ECCV demonstrated with the *Recognising and Respecting Carers* project, tailored and culturally responsive workshops and information sessions can educate and inform CALD communities about the support that is available to them and how to access it, how to practice self-care, and how to reduce stress and guard against burnout. Such workshops can introduce the topic of elder abuse with appropriate nuance and sensitivity, raising awareness of the various forms it can take, how to identify it, and strategies to confront it.

***“You empowered and resourced participants with information in their Greek language on what they could do to assist if they encountered signs of abuse amongst peers, friends, relatives and neighbours.”***

- Leader of a Greek community group.  
(Attendee at elder abuse prevention session)

Although resource-intensive, this approach provides a means of building trust and close relationships with CALD carer groups. Due to shame, stigma and differences in understanding across

and within cultural groups, it can be difficult to introduce issues relating to elder abuse upfront in peer settings. To bring these issues into the conversation therefore takes time, and a sensitive and respectful approach is required.

ECCV has found that the concept of elder abuse is often not well understood in CALD communities, and that cultural expectations can cloud understanding of what constitutes mistreatment.

Some cultural groups may see elder abuse as solely an outcome of malicious behaviour, while others may not see some behaviours (such as those arising through co-dependency) as types of elder abuse.

Through the project, ECCV came to appreciate how carers from different backgrounds had differing understandings of what is acceptable behaviour in Australia compared to that in their country of origin. Sometimes this included a lack of knowledge about illegal behaviours. In particular, it was notable that many participants perceived that only physical abuse would be against the law. Similarly, some adult children thought that they were within their rights to use their parents' money, as they expected to inherit it eventually anyway. Once they learned that this may also be a form of elder abuse, they understood it and were grateful to be protected from getting into potential legal trouble themselves. This demonstrates how important preventative action and education is in combatting elder abuse.

An increased level of dependence on family for daily care can result in burnout for those providing it, with consequent risk of neglect and failure to provide appropriate care.<sup>8</sup> Although the evidence base is limited, research suggests that this is particularly the case where the older person has limited English language proficiency, and where they rely on family members for everyday care and social and financial support.<sup>9</sup>

Informal care arrangements in this context can increase the dependence of the older person on their caregiver, who may be their only trusted source of support and companionship. Given that in CALD communities younger people often have greater levels of English proficiency and social connection, older people may be more willing to forego control and decision-making over their daily affairs to family members, and this can lead to their exploitation.<sup>10</sup>

To broach these sensitive issues, ECCV situated elder abuse more broadly as part of the experience of caring. A needs analysis was undertaken with identified CALD carer groups to first assess and identify gaps and barriers they encounter as part of their caring role. Tailored workshops and

---

<sup>8</sup> Seniors Rights Victoria (2016). Submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission on Elder Abuse.

<https://seniorsrights.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2016August1PolicyALRCElderAbuseSubmission.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre. (2011). The Ageing Experience of Australians from Migrant Backgrounds. ACT, National Seniors Australia; Wainer, J., Owada, K., Lowndes, G. & Darzins, P. (2011). Diversity and financial elder abuse in Victoria: Protecting elders' assets study. Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University, Melbourne

<sup>10</sup> Seniors Rights Victoria, op cit.

meaningful engagement activities were delivered, and through this ongoing support process, the topic of elder abuse was sensitively introduced, and referrals to support offered.

ECCV also found that carer groups wanted to keep the sessions uplifting and productive. The topic of elder abuse was often seen as negative and off-putting to talk about in a peer support context. To address this, the topic was generally weaved into sessions addressing topics such as digital literacy and online scams, to which older people can be especially vulnerable. From there, the topic of financial abuse can be introduced, incorporating the topic of elder abuse more generally.

# Project Findings and Learnings

Key learnings and findings from the *Recognising and Respecting Carers* project were:

- Carers from CALD backgrounds are often not familiar with the concept of elder abuse and may not recognise the signs of elder abuse.
- Many carers did not initially recognise that the actions of a carer could in some situations lead to elder abuse.
- Carers from different backgrounds had differing understandings of what is acceptable behaviour and what is against the law in Australia.
- Workshop participants were initially very reluctant to engage with discussions about elder abuse. The topic must therefore be introduced sensitively, once trust has been established. After participating in these sessions, participants reported that they saw the value in learning about elder abuse and where they could turn for support if it is ever required.
- Most carers who spoke to ECCV lacked any means of support; they reported feeling burnt out and depressed.
- Many carers from CALD backgrounds lack knowledge about carer support services and how to apply for support.
- Lack of financial literacy and awareness of available support services amongst CALD carers can have significant ramifications. Some carers do not access financial or respite support that they are entitled to.
- Many CALD carers are consumed by their carer role, to the detriment of their own needs, health and wellbeing. There is little concept of the importance of self-care.
- Low English-language proficiency and digital literacy are barriers that prevent carers from accessing support and respite services.
- Many of the most isolated groups had very low levels of English-language proficiency. In some groups, only the leader could speak English. English classes are therefore an important first step for many groups before other capacity-building measures can be undertaken.
- Many full-time carers experience difficulty interacting socially with other people, including their families, due to the demands of their caring role and the lack of respite options to enable attendance at social activities.
- Needs Assessments can be used to tailor information sessions to the specific needs of each group, and ensure that sessions are culturally safe and appropriate for group members.

- Face-to-face information sessions, as opposed to online meetings, are more culturally appropriate for groups.
- Delivering sessions at locations and times at which groups were accustomed to meeting proved to be very successful.
- The bilingual skills of group leaders can be of benefit in assisting to support the delivery of sessions in-language.
- Information sessions delivered on topics such as legal rights, organisational governance and My Aged Care are regarded as particularly valuable. Participants expressed particular interest in learning about powers of attorney and medical Advanced Care Directives.
- Carers Victoria utilised its current capacity through its advisory line and education activities to provide information, service navigation, referrals and case management for carers referred through this project. They will apply these learnings to other carer referrals they receive from culturally diverse backgrounds.

# Challenges and enablers in accessing support

## Language and digital literacy

For carers not fluent in English, language can be a major barrier to accessing information and navigating the support system. It is vital for support services to allocate sufficient time to supporting carers from CALD backgrounds to understand information or provide case management support where needed. It is also important to be proactive in making referrals and following them up, for both carers and the services that they are referred to. Services staff need to make follow-up calls to ensure that the connection they have intended actually happens as part of their referral protocols.

Translating and interpreting must be offered when necessary. Service providers should be aware that some CALD communities may prefer to have group leaders provide in-language support when they receive information, as they can perform this in the manner most accessible to their audience.

Digital literacy also presents a service access barrier for many older CALD carers. Digital ability is crucial to ensuring fair and equitable access to essential services and online opportunities. When low levels of digital literacy are combined with lack of English fluency, the overall barriers are significant. Organisations such as Australian Multicultural Community Services provide digital literacy training to multicultural seniors.<sup>11</sup>

## Culture and religion

As mentioned earlier, in many cultures caring for family members is seen as part of the duty of family members. Being a caregiver is not thought to constitute a form of relationship different from that of any normal family member would provide to another. This is what is meant by “hidden carers” – people who don’t identify with the term “carer” because they believe that what they are doing is simply fulfilling their duty as a family member.

Culture and religion can affect the willingness of carers to seek support in less tangible ways too. ECCV has heard from carers who believe that they will receive an eternal reward for performing caring duties but will lose this if they seek support. Care must be taken to ensure that beliefs are respected, and members of CALD communities do not feel that they are having western notions of care and support forced upon them.

## Gender

Data collected by carer services indicates that men are more likely than women to access information and support services. This is despite the fact that women actually do the majority of caring. It is important therefore to provide information in ways that will be accessed by women.

---

<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.amcservices.org.au/projects/digital-piazza/>.

Connections must be made at the grassroots level. Information provision through workplaces or digital platforms will generally only reach people who are already connected. Information should instead be provided in places where people already meet and feel safe, rather than in unfamiliar venues or locations. This gives participants a sense of control in deciding where and when to meet. Relationships should first be established with community leaders, who can facilitate sessions with community members in an environment where they feel comfortable, allowing rapport to be established and trust to be built.

## **Intersectionality**

To support carers from CALD backgrounds, service providers must understand how social and political identity barriers combine with other layers of advantage, disadvantage and discrimination, and how these affect how a carer will access services. There needs to be an awareness of the balance of power between carer and care recipient, and carer and service provider.

Social stigma can also affect how carers think about seeking support. Parents of children with a disability may not wish to identify as carers, as they do not wish members of their community to know that they have a child with a disability. Similarly, adult children may not want people to know that their parents have dementia. Carer support must be delivered in a way that is cognisant of these sensitivities.

## **Data collection**

Carer services often have an obligation to collect data about their customers for reporting purposes, but collection processes can inhibit building trust with CALD communities. Service users may be hesitant to provide personal information due to past experiences of discrimination or trauma, for cultural reasons, or due to an unwillingness to provide data before rapport has been built. Processes must be put in place to create an environment that is welcoming and builds trust. It is important for services to establish that they care for their clients before asking them for information. Another frustration that CALD carers often report is having to answer the same questions multiple times, when they are referred from one support organisation to another.

Programs must therefore be designed in ways that allow time for trust to be built, before any personal questions are asked. If consent is obtained in the right way, it is the experience of ECCV that carers from CALD backgrounds are generally willing to share personal information, and allow it to be shared amongst service providers.



# Supporting CALD carers

In our workshops with CALD community groups during the *Recognising and Respecting Carers* project, ECCV developed a constructive engagement approach. This approach serves as a blueprint for how carer services can build relationships with CALD communities and connect CALD carers to available support. This process starts with creating relationships with community leaders, who can assist with building connections and identifying needs. CALD communities will generally be most comfortable if discussions take place in venues and locations with which they already have familiarity and are accustomed to meeting in.

Our experience is that once the connection has been made and trust established, community members will feel more comfortable speaking about their needs. A more thorough needs assessment can then be undertaken, and service providers can proceed to match needs with appropriate services. At this stage, community members will generally be willing and often show a desire to learn more about carer support, and service providers can deliver information sessions incorporating a broader range of subjects.

Carers Victoria utilised its current capacity through its advisory line and education activities to provide information, service navigation, referrals and case management for carers referred through this project. Carers were also supported to access the Carer Gateway.

ECCV collaborated with providers who had funding through the Victorian Government's Support for Carers program to fund activities and excursions for community groups. These led to increased enthusiasm and participation in the subsequent education sessions.

Providing this type of support to carers is critical to reduce the risks of them experiencing high stress and potential burnout, which would in turn increase the risk that they may inadvertently abuse the care recipient, or even end up in need of care themselves. Carers must be encouraged and supported to practise self-care, manage their emotional health, maintain healthy lifestyles, and maintain a balanced life outside of their caring responsibilities.

***“Your presentation was delivered in a manner that highlighted the strains and pressures on carers that may contribute to tense relationships.”***

- Leader of a Greek community group.

Once relationships and trust have been built, sensitive issues such as elder abuse can be introduced to the conversation. ECCV's experience is that there can be resistance to raising these issues in initial meetings, or too early in the engagement process. Community members are often unwilling to countenance that such things occur in their communities, or at least to speak about them in the presence of their peers. Therefore, they are best introduced and discussed in the overall context of caring and support for carers.

Collaboration among service providers is important, as is the involvement of other organisations, such as community legal centres delivering legal information sessions covering subjects such as wills and powers of attorney. ECCV developed partnerships with external subject matter experts (SMEs), such as Victoria Police and Peninsula Community Legal Centre, to deliver information sessions and workshops in response to the needs of each group. A co-design approach was adopted with SMEs to ensure that sessions were culturally safe and appropriate.

***“I liked the session very much; I learned a lot about power of attorney and medical treatment decision making which I never thought existed.”***

- Member of Muslim community group.

## Case study: Afghan Community Group

The project assisted an Afghan community group in southeast Melbourne to build their capacity to support carers in their community, as well as with other issues related to their health, social inclusion and community connections.

A member of the Afghan community in Casey was introduced to ECCV by a worker at her local neighbourhood house. She wanted assistance to establish a group for members of her community where they could both socialise and at the same time learn about Australian law, education, community services and other information to support their community. ECCV was willing to assist, and saw that this provided an opportunity to speak to the group about caring and support any carers amongst them. ECCV was able to support the group while also identifying carers and linking them to support services.

At the group's first meeting, ECCV explained to the group that a carer was a person who provided unpaid care and support to family members and/or friends with a disability, mental illness, chronic health issue or older person. Upon hearing this, 12 out of the 19 group members identified themselves as carers. Previously none had thought of themselves as carers as they were not receiving carer support services or payments. ECCV spoke to them about why this role is significant and the support services that are available to them.

ECCV assisted the group to establish and seek governance support. It was identified that as a newly emerging community, the group had specific needs that were different to those of more established communities. After initial discussions with the group's leader, a needs analysis was conducted. From this, ECCV assisted the group to plan information sessions based on their needs.

The group was introduced to Carers Victoria, who assisted the carers in the group to access various support services. ECCV also arranged for Australian Multicultural Community Services (AMCS) to support the group with digital literacy training, health and wellbeing classes, exercise classes and provided catering. ECCV arranged for information sessions to be provided on issues including self-care, legal rights and making wills, guardianships, seniors' rights and elder abuse awareness, public transport and using Myki. The neighbourhood house provided a venue for them to meet for free.

When funding from the *Recognising and Respecting Carers* project ceased, ECCV arranged for the group to receive ongoing support from AMCS. With the governance training they received, the group is considering incorporating next year. The neighbourhood house continues to provide them with a venue and has auspice arrangements in place. They are considering applying for further funding through grant opportunities to ensure their long-term viability.

# Recommendations

To support the needs of vulnerable CALD carers and continue to raise awareness of elder abuse in care relationships, ECCV recommends that the Victorian Government:

1. Provide ongoing resourcing to enable the establishment of interagency partnerships between multicultural community organisations and mainstream carer services to deliver projects that support the needs of carers in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Such projects should:
  - Raise awareness of the significant unmet needs of CALD carers and the broader systemic barriers they experience.
  - Use a culturally responsive lens that ensures trusted relationships are developed and strengthened, and community determined solutions are supported.
  - Use outreach work to link “hidden” CALD carers to available support through information sharing and relationship building.
  - Support identification and action of priority advocacy issues for CALD carers through broader community and stakeholder engagement.
  - Raise awareness of elder abuse in carer relationships and reduce the stigma associated with seeking support.
2. Fund programs that empower community leaders to reach and support carers within their communities and link them to carer support services, and to understand indicators of elder abuse and how to respond to these.
3. Support the development of collaborative partnerships between Carers Victoria, Carer Gateway, the Department of Social Services and relevant state departments, and other relevant organisations to improve referral pathways and access for culturally diverse carers based on learnings from this project.
4. Provide funding to carer services to engage in assertive outreach to establish linkages with CALD community groups, and support them to understand how to identify as a carer, navigate the support system, and to provide case management where appropriate.
5. Resource carer service providers so that their data collection systems can record information about the cultural and linguistic background of service users, and that this data is regularly collected, analysed and published by the Victorian Government
6. Develop Key Performance Indicators for funded carer agencies that include increased engagement with diverse communities and greater diversity amongst service users.
7. Fund cultural safety training for staff working in the carer support sector, including capacity to modify funded treatment programs in line with culturally sensitive practice.
8. Fund the co-design, by carer services in collaboration with multicultural community organisations, of in-language resources for CALD carers.



Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV)  
Suite 101, 398 Sydney Road  
Coburg VIC 3058

P: 03 9354 9555  
E: [eccv@eccv.org.au](mailto:eccv@eccv.org.au)  
**[eccv.org.au](http://eccv.org.au)**