

OLDER AUSTRALIANS GET ACCESS TO PANDEMIC ADVICE WITH NEW MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT LINE

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Older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds can now receive tailored access to COVID-19 updates and support to receive important aged care information as the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing launches its new multilingual COVID-19 support line.

Funded by the Australian Department of Health, the project offers six 1800 phone lines covering six languages – Greek, Arabic, Vietnamese, Mandarin,

Cantonese and Italian, where callers are greeted straight away in their chosen language.

Currently the support line is available until end of July 2021.

The Multilingual Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line was designed in response to growing concerns that older people from CALD backgrounds were missing out on vital information about COVID-19 and aged care related services.



Multilingual Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line

Italian 1800 549 844

Greek 1800 549 845

Vietnamese 1800 549 846

Mandarin 1800 549 847

Cantonese 1800 549 848

Arabic 1800 549 849



IMAGE: OLDER PERSONS ON THE TELEPHONE, TEXT IN THE MIDDLE INCLUDES PHONE NUMBERS FOR VARIOUS LANGUAGE GROUPS

“While it’s been great to see governments and aged care services focus on providing critical health advice to older people during COVID-19, it’s become apparent that a one size fits all approach can exclude people”, said Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing Manager, Lisa Tribuzio.

“A plethora of health updates have been translated, sent to communities and posted on websites, however in many ways these have been incredibly confusing for older people to navigate.

“A large proportion of older people from CALD backgrounds have limited English language proficiency and some may revert back to their first language as they age.

“It’s wonderful to see projects like this new multilingual support line help our sector and government to better tailor public health advice for these groups as language issues can present significant barriers for people in need of aged care services.”

COTA Australia Chief Executive Ian Yates commended the inclusion of this new service. “This is an important initiative which will help to promote access to a wide range of information for older people who are multilingual or have English language barriers.”

Lisa explains that investing in CALD communities is ultimately about ensuring the same level of access to aged care services and providing important health advice to all older Australians.

“It’s important to remember that older people from diverse linguistic backgrounds are vulnerable to having digital literacy barriers that often limits the impact that simply translated materials can have,” she said.

“Working to tailor the delivery of health advice in ways that better address these barriers through a phone line where people are greeted in-language is incredibly important to ensure that older Australians from CALD backgrounds receive the health advice they need.

She advises that while a step in the right direction, the support line in itself remains far from a final solution.

“The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing and PICAC Alliance are looking forward to continue working with government and the wider sector to integrate flexible approaches to inclusive practices from the very onset of service development and delivery.”

How does the support line work?

Older people, their families and carers can contact the Multilingual Older Persons COVID-19, free calls via Support Line Monday to Friday between 2pm and 5pm Melbourne time (except public holidays) on:

1800 549 844 - Italian

1800 549 845 - Greek

1800 549 846 - Vietnamese

1800 549 847 - Mandarin

1800 549 848 - Cantonese

1800 549 849 - Arabic

All calls are triaged by trained multilingual personnel and then directed to multilingual guidance from the Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line for older Australians delivered by COTA Australia, OPAN, National Seniors Australia and Dementia Australia.

The Multilingual Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line is led by the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing (supported by Benetas) in partnership with Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre and All Graduates Interpreting and Translating and supported by the PICAC Alliance, Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN), Dementia Australia, National Seniors Australia and COTA Australia. It’s further supported by media partner the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcaster’s Council.

Find out more on Multilingual Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line at: www.picacalliance.org or email multilingual@culturaldiversity.com.au

