Inquiry into support for elderly migrants and refugees by the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee of the Victorian Parliament

December 2021

Submitted by the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing (supported by Benetas)

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Contents

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Introduction

We are pleased to provide a submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into support for elderly migrants and refugees. As we are working at a systemic and governance level, it was appropriate for the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing to focus our response on section A of the Terms of Reference.

About the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing

The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing (The Centre), supported by Benetas, currently receives project funding from the Australian Government Department of Health to administer the Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care (PICAC) program. The PICAC program provides funding to an organisation in each state and territory who is funded to:

- Improve partnerships between aged care service providers, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and the Department of Health
- Ensure the special needs of older people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are identified and addressed.

The Centre is the PICAC Victoria provider and delivers expertise in relation to culturally inclusive policy and practice for the aged services sector. It has over 20 years of experience in supporting aged care providers in addressing the needs of older people from CALD backgrounds.

The purpose of The Centre is to build the capacity and capabilities of Australian aged care providers to deliver services that are welcoming, inclusive and accessible. The Centre's service areas include:

- Inclusive practice training and workshops
- Capacity building to promote cultural inclusion and equity
- Diversity advice and consulting.

The Centre's Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion within Aged Care

The Centre works with aged care providers to better respond to the needs and preferences of older people from CALD backgrounds. As part of The Centre's work on inclusive care, the Inclusive Services Standards[1] have been developed to guide and train aged care organisations to deliver inclusive services. The Inclusive Service Standards provide a framework for services to adapt and improve their services and organisational practices so they are welcoming, safe and accessible. By meeting the Inclusive Service Standards aged care providers will be able to:

- Better understand the diverse interests, goals and needs of their consumers
- Empower consumers to make informed decisions about their service provision
- Deliver flexible, accessible services free of barriers and discrimination and
- Implement the Consumer Directed Care approach and achieve quality outcomes for all consumers.

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[1] http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/inclusive-service-standards

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The Inclusive Service Standards have been recognised by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission as a key resource in promoting consumer choice and dignity.

The Centre's Resources to Support the Aged Care Sector in adopting Diversity and Inclusion Approaches

The Centre is funded to coordinate and update the national website which has a range of resources for aged care providers to access in relation to culturally appropriate care. Some of the resources include the Centre's Practice Guides[2] with topics such as:

- Accessing Interpreter Services
- Communication
- Data and Demographics
- Food and Nutrition
- Working with Bilingual Staff
- Developing a policy for use of interpreter services
- Culturally Specific Information
- Digital Inclusion
- Culturally Inclusive Feedback
- Effective Co-design with Consumers from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds.

The Centre's diversity webinars[34] designed from feedback from the sector with topics including:

- Working effectively with interpreters in aged care
- Applying a diversity lens to dementia care
- Accessing multilingual resources
- Applying a diversity lens to consumer centred care
- Creating inclusive organisations
- Linking inclusive practice to the aged care quality standards
- Tips for effective co-design with older people from diverse backgrounds
- Inclusive consumer feedback
- Inclusive leadership
- Moving on from unconscious bias
- Applying a diversity lens to end of life care
- Mutual and effective partnerships with multicultural communities
- Diversity strategies within the aged care sector

The Centre has also designed tip sheets, templates and resources to support aged care organisations on their inclusive service journey. They include a tip sheet that aligns the performance measures of Inclusive Service Standards to the Aged Care Quality Standards[5].

A popular resource on the website is the multilingual page that provides updated multicultural aged care health information including Covid-19 links for CALD communities as well as the aged care

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[2] http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/service-providers/practice-guides
[3] http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/service-providers/training/diversity-webinars-2021
[4] http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/service-providers/training/diversity-webinars-2022
[5] http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/images/tip_sheets_templates/TipSheet_AligningPerformanceMeasures withACQS.pdf

communication cards[6] and signage available in 63 languages. In addition, the 'Ageing in Australia: the Immigrant Experience' video covers four stories of older people from CALD backgrounds and their version of ageing in Australia. For more information about the range of resources available on the Centre's website, visit: www.culturaldiversity.com.au .

Statistics on elderly migrants and refugees in Australia

According to the ABS Census from 2016, 37 percent of people aged 65 and over were born overseas[7].In Victoria, that number is higher, where 37.2 percent of the older population were born in non-English-speaking countries[8]. The Centre notes that the number of CALD (CALD) older people is likely to be higher due to underreporting and barriers experienced in disclosing their cultural identity in the ABS Census. This may be due to adverse experiences with government authorities, fear of getting their visas revoked, lack of access to the Census, language and health literacy barriers and limited opportunity to know how to complete the Census.

Royal Commission and Federal Budget

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety was established on 8 October 2018 and a final report on 26 February 2021 was released. The Royal Commission Executive summary of the final report recognised the gaps in the current aged care system in relation to culturally appropriate care.

> *"The existing aged care system is not well equipped to provide care that is non-discriminatory and appropriate for people's identity and experience. We heard about aged care providers that do not provide culturally safe care, that is, care that acknowledges, respects and values people's diverse needs. Across the aged care system, staff are often poorly trained in culturally safe practices, with little understanding of the additional needs of people from diverse backgrounds."[9]*

> *"The aged care system should be equally welcoming and supportive of everyone needing care. But we heard there can be a lack of understanding and respect for people's culture, background and life experiences."[10]*

Some of the suggestions in the report include ensuring the aged care system is designed for diversity, difference, complexity and individuality and that cultural safety and trauma-informed training should be core requirement for all workers who are involved in direct contact with people seeking or receiving services in the aged care system.[11]

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[6] http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/service-providers/multilingual-resources/communication-cards

[7] https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-people/older-australia-at-a-glance/contents/about

[8] City of Greater Dandenong adapted data from 2016 ABS Census

[9] page 7, https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/final-report-executive-summary.pdf

[10] page 11, https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/final-report-executive-summary.pdf

[11] https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/final-report-executive-summary.pdf

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The report also suggests a new aged care system with a new "rights based" Act which places people at the centre of aged care. The report also suggests more resources are needed to support access for people entering and navigating the aged care system and access for groups who are already at a disadvantage.

In relation to the Federal budget, released in May 2021, an investment of $17.7 billion dollars was mentioned by the Commonwealth into reshaping and resourcing the aged care system over the next five years. The budget mentions an investment in translating and interpreting services to help culturally and linguistically diverse older people to access and navigate the aged care system. There is also a proposed implementation of the Specialist Verification Program which will certify providers who offer specific services directed at diverse consumers. This program will make specialist providers more accessible to consumers, their families, carers and advocates. The Federal Government is also investing in local Community Care Finders to improve engagement with vulnerable older people by providing face-to-face assistance to navigate aged care services and help connect to relevant support services[12].

The Centre advocates for the Victorian government to support and complement the recommendations from the Royal Commission in relation to supporting elderly older people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and the Commonwealth's vision for a new aged care system in the next five years.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

The Aged Care Diversity Framework

The Australian Government's Aged Care Diversity Framework[13] is designed to enable older people to experience a high quality aged care system which ensures equitable access and outcomes and embraces people's diverse characteristics and life experiences.

Legal Acts and Declarations:

The human rights of elderly older people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are covered under International, Federal, and Victorian laws:

- United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948
- Aged Care Act 1997 (Commonwealth)
- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Commonwealth)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Victoria).

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[12] https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/05/aged-care-reforms-to-support-people-from-diverse-backgrounds.pdf

[13] https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/aged-care-diversity-framework-initiative

Linking the Aged Care Quality Standards to the Inclusive Service Standards

The Inclusive Service Standards, developed by The Centre, assist aged care providers to become better equipped at meeting the diverse needs of their consumers. They provide a framework to support organisations on their journey to becoming truly inclusive for all consumers. The Inclusive Service Standards guide organisations through articulating their commitment to inclusive services, developing systems that support inclusive services and ensuring that there is capacity to deliver inclusive services.

The Australian Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission references The Centre's Inclusive Service Standards as a key resources in assisting providers to comply with the Aged Care Quality Standards. Meeting some or all of the performance measures in the Inclusive Service Standards provides evidence that an organisation is working to embed an inclusive, non-discriminatory approach to its delivery of care and services. The Centre has aligned the performance measure of the Inclusive Service Standards with the relevant Aged Care Quality Standards requirements[14].

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[14]http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/images/tip_sheets_templates/TipSheet_AligningPerformanceMeasures withACQS.pdf

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A) Adequacy of services for older Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds

What is currently working in Victoria

Access and Support Program

The Access and Support program is a Victorian program and supports older people and people with a disability to access appropriate services through a navigation approach. It has been instrumental in supporting older people from CALD backgrounds to access and navigate the aged care service system.

Diversity and inclusion planning and practice for CHSP and HACC-PYP funded providers

Victoria is the only State in Australia that funds the Diversity Planning and Practice program. The program mandates any provider who is funded for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) or (Home and Community Care Program for Younger People) HACC-PYP to submit a diversity plan with the support from diversity advisors across the State and aligned with the Aged Care Diversity Frameworks outcomes for consumers. Diversity and inclusion planning and practice needs to be front and centre of Victorian government service design, planning, and policy. The Inclusive Service Standards created by The Centre, are a useful tool to guide and train organisations to become more inclusive. The Centre stands ready to work with the Victorian Government to help develop more inclusive State programs and policies to ensure these meet the needs and preferences of Victoria's diverse populations.

Ethnic and multicultural senior citizens clubs and groups

There are more than 900 ethnic and multicultural senior citizens clubs in Victoria[15]. These clubs play a key role in promoting mental wellbeing and social connectedness. They support members to have access to vital health and ageing related information and help people to navigate services and provide opportunities for members to socialise in their own language and culture. These clubs however do not reach all seniors.

What is needed in Victoria

More support for language services

Translating and interpreting services are needed to help older people from CALD backgrounds make informed decisions about their health and life choices. Speaking one's preferred language is a human right. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms in the Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as language[16]. The Victorian Department of Health and Human Service Language Services guidelines note that language services

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[15] https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/211015%20-%20Supporting%20Senior%20Multicultural%20Victorians.pdf?utm_source=miragenews&utm_medium=miragenews&utm_campaign=news

[16] https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/commission-general/universal-declaration-human-rights-human-rights-your-fingertips-human

are not always offered, identified or required when they should be. The policy also identified a correlation between health and wellbeing benefits and access to interpreting services of people who speak little or no English.[17] Currently, all Australian government aged care providers receive free interpreting services for their consumers but do not receive free translation services.

The 2021 Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing Conference 'Care to Communicate' revealed that older people from CALD backgrounds in residential aged care often withdraw from communication with aged care staff if they don't make an effort to speak with the older person. This can lead to social isolation of the older person and negatively impacts on people's wellbeing and health. While family members play an important role in supporting older people, there are issues of appropriateness and privacy when it comes to interpreting for them. In Australia, language services are readily available through TIS National, but uptake is often low as older people and aged care staff often aren't aware of these services. It is important that more work is done to ensure translating and interpreting services can be fully utilised in care settings to promote quality care to older people from CALD backgrounds.[18]

In 2020, the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing received funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health to operate a multilingual older person's COVID-19 Support line. This support line operated in six languages and allowed older people to gain support and aged care information in their preferred language. Evaluation from this program revealed that when older people have access to services in their preferred language, they had the freedom to unfold the complexity of their stories at their own pace to the multilingual workers and this allowed them to express their concerns organically without interruption and with fluidity. This capacity to express freely allowed for older people to identify further needs and concerns which led to exploring further services and multiple referrals to other services such as dementia and advocacy services.

A focus on culturally inclusive feedback and consumer voice

Consumer engagement should be accessible for older people, family members, representatives and others to provide feedback and contribute ideas. Cultural variation is an important factor in all levels of consumer participation. It is therefore imperative to have cultural awareness when it comes to consumer participation and feedback when it comes to shaping a new aged care system for Victoria. Additional barriers for older people from CALD backgrounds to provide feedback include (but not limited to) lack of processes and resources in the preferred language such as translated feedback forms; access to interpreters; and access to bilingual and bicultural staff that can support older people to provide their feedback.

Effective Co-design with older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

The Ageing Well in A Changing World report[19] by the Commissioner for Senior Victorians notes that senior Victorians wish to have a greater voice and greater input into Government decision making. At a national level, the Council of Elders is being established to provide advice to the Australian Government about ageing and the aged care reform. Ongoing feedback and input from older people

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[17] https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/language-services-policy-and-guidelines
[18] http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/news-and-events/events/conferences/cultural-diversity-in-ageing-conference-2021-presentations/699-panel-discussion
[19] https://www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/-/media/seniors/files/commissioner-for-senior-victorians/report-ageing-well-in-a-changing-world-2020.pdf?la=en&hash=5E937926E554413FB59249427FBF8BD0B84F13E0

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is essential to ensure services are responsive to their needs and preferences. The Centre's Practice Guide on Effective Co-design with Consumers from CALD Backgrounds[20] provides some key suggestions to adopt culturally sensitive approaches.

Supporting new and emerging communities

The Centre advocates for diversity of choice in aged care for older people from CALD backgrounds. Feedback to The Centre indicate that some new and emerging communities are seeking to establish ethno-specific, culturally appropriate care services or facilities to ensure their community members receive culturally inclusive care.

According to the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA), new and emerging are considered to be communities and refugees that have recently arrived in Australia and that may need additional support in the settlement process[21]. According to the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV), new and emerging communities in Victoria are mainly from the Middle East and South-West Asia, Asia and Africa regions.[22] Also, an increasing number of Latin Americans have settled in Victoria. Key identifiers of ageing new and emerging communities are:

- The community infrastructure to deliver aged care services is underdeveloped
- Communities experience a significant increase in their aged population especially the age group from 55-64 which is rapidly augmenting
- The majority of the community has settled in Australia more recently[23].

Older people from new and emerging communities may find it difficult to access the service system. The African Think Tank highlights some key issues that relate to older people from African Australian communities and aged care services. These are:

- Little English language proficiency of older African Australians
- Low health literacy
- Little knowledge about their rights and the culture of service provision common in Australia
- Aged care is considered to be a service based on the principle of charity rather than entitlement[24].

Key policies to support new and emerging communities in aged care may include:

- Ensuring that aged care services respond to the cultural, linguistic, and spiritual preferences and needs of new and emerging communities
- Helping to build the capacity of new and emerging communities to deliver culturally appropriate care

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[20] http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/images/Practice_Guides/Effective_Co-Design_with_CALD_Consumers.pdf

[21] https://fecca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/New-Emerging-Communities-in-Australia-Enhancing-Capacity-for-Advocacy.pdf

[22] https://eccv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/5-Sept_2012_Final_New_and_Emerging_Communities_ECCV_Position_Paper_1.pdf

[23] Page 7, https://eccv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ECCV-Discussion-Paper-Healthy-Ageing-in-NEC-Final.pdf

[24] https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/34e58b_bb1c442062d04582b4c12ed0010c00a8.pdf

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- Equal partnerships of aged care organisations with new and emerging communities for the benefit of meeting the cultural, linguistic, and spiritual needs of older people from new and emerging communities.[25]

Viability of ethno-specific and multicultural organisations

Ethno-specific and multicultural organisations struggle to sustain their vital services to the community, especially in the area of Commonwealth Home Support Programme. Government support is necessary to ensure the viability of ethno-specific and multicultural organisations to deliver care to their older people from CALD backgrounds.[26]

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[25] https://eccv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ECCV-Discussion-Paper-Healthy-Ageing-in-NEC-Final.pdf
[26] https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/submission/AWF.660.00071.0001.pdf

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Recommendations for A) Adequacy of services for older Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds

Recommendation 1
That the Victorian and Australian Governments continue to support and enhance the Victorian Access and Support program including to help older people from new and emerging communities to navigate the aged care system.

Recommendation 2
That the Victorian Government continues to encourage diversity planning and practice reporting and that reporting on diversity and inclusion is expanded across Victorian government funded aged care services. In addition it is recommended that organisations are supported to utilise and incorporate the Inclusive Service Standards to improve diversity and inclusion practices at the organisational level.

Recommendation 3
That the Victorian Government works closely with ethno-specific and multicultural community groups, organisations, peak bodies and subject matter experts to develop strategies for culturally inclusive consumer feedback mechanisms to ensure services are responsive of Victoria's diversity and to promote person centred care.

Recommendation 4
That the Victorian Government establishes a multilingual phone line where older people from migrant and refugee backgrounds can seek aged care information in their first language.

Recommendation 5
That the Victorian Government places resources in language services to support older people to be able to speak in their preferred language across the aged care pathway.

Recommendation 6
That the Victorian Government works closely with The Centre to develop tools, policies, and strategies to ensure that government programs appropriately meet the needs of older people from CALD backgrounds as well as a diversity training calendar.

Recommendation 7
That the Victorian Government establishes an aged care diversity advisory group to inform ageing, aged care policies and programs in Victoria.

Recommendation 8
That the Victorian Government continues to resource and support ethnic and multicultural senior citizens clubs.

Recommendation 9
That the Victorian Government establishes an Older People's Multicultural Council to facilitate input from older people from CALD backgrounds into Government policies, programs, and services.

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Recommendation 10
That the Victorian Governments develop policies, programs, and grants to support new and emerging communities access culturally appropriate aged care.

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