



Golden Years



**Special Issue:
History of ethnic aged care at the ECCV**



**ethnic
communities'
council of**



GOLDEN YEARS is a newsletter on ethnic aged care issues produced by the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, jointly supported by the Victorian and Australian Governments.

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home and community care

A JOINT COMMONWEALTH AND STATE/TERRITORY PROGRAM
PROVIDING FUNDING AND ASSISTANCE FOR AUSTRALIANS IN NEED



Contents & From the Editor

Inside this Issue

From the Editor	2
Message from the Chairperson	3

Feature: History of Ethnic Aged Care at the ECCV

Forward History of Ethnic Aged Care at the ECCV	4
History of Ethnic Aged Care at the ECCV – Part One	5 - 9

General

Palliative care cultural responsiveness project	10 - 11
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Dear Reader

I welcome you to the autumn edition of Golden Years.

ECCV has reviewed Golden Years and a decision has been made to transition to an on-line version. After July 2014 Golden Years publications will be available as an electronic magazine only. ECCV has worked on a transition plan to ensure a smooth changeover. I kindly ask you to send through your contact details, including email address to make sure that you will receive the newsletter in the future. For this purpose you will find enclosed an insert with a reply paid envelope.

This edition of Golden Years features the first part of the origins of ethnic aged care at ECCV and how it developed over time. Also in this edition an article on the joint project by Palliative Care Victoria, ECCV and the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health to raise awareness of the notion of palliative care and related services in multicultural communities.



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Message from the Chairperson

This year ECCV celebrates its 40th anniversary which makes it a good time to also look at the origins of ethnic aged care in Victoria. The developments in the 1970s and 1980s at the ECCV have significantly influenced the ethno-specific and multicultural community aged care sector of today, so I take pleasure in welcoming you to this special Golden Years edition on the history of ethnic aged care at the ECCV.

In recent months the transition of the HACC program from Victoria to the Commonwealth has been a major focus of ECCV's aged care policy work. For instance, In early February we hosted a Department of Social Services/ Department of Health consultation on the HACC transition. One concern that emerged from the consultation loud and clear was how agencies will establish direct relationships with the Commonwealth to protect the benefits inherent in the Victoria system. In a submission to the Department of Social Services in November 2013, ECCV highlighted some of the benefits of HACC services that are vital to seniors from a non-English speaking background including:

- Language Services Credit Line;
- Access and Support;
- Planned Activity Groups and Friendly Visiting Program;
- Ongoing consultations with the aged care sector; and
- Policy advocacy for the multicultural community aged care sector.

So there is plenty of work to do, but there is also something to be particularly pleased about and that is the Commonwealth Government has confirmed its commitment to implement the National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds. The ECCV was heavily involved in having this strategy developed and adopted by the previous government.

I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the Victorian Department of Health for their long-standing commitment to working with the ECCV to ensure the Victorian HACC system has been attuned to the needs of Victoria's multicultural ageing population and we will work to establish an equally solid relationship with the Department of Social Services.



Eddie Micallef

ECCV Chairperson



Foreword: History of Ethnic Aged Care at the ECCV

When Giovanni Sgro former representative to the Victorian parliament and a leading member of the past Ethnic Rights Committee, made his maiden speech at Parliament he spoke in Italian. This speech contained a powerful message, and that is, that language plays a vital role in recognising migrants in the context of a society that has been significantly built on their contributions.

Since the early days of the ECCV, the right of seniors from a non-English speaking background to culturally and linguistically appropriate care has been an organisational priority. This has been important in ensuring equality in terms of access to services.

The ECCV was the first Ethnic Communities' Council in Australia and that is why the organisation was referred to as Ethnic Communities' Council (ECC). ECCV had received funding to employ what was then called a Community Development Officer and I later strongly advocated for the position of Aged Care Policy Officer. This position has provided the secretarial support to the ECCV Aged Care Policy Sub-committee and has strengthened the ethno-specific and multicultural community aged care sector in Victoria.

I warmly thank Ton Westerveld, first Chairperson of the ECC Committee on the Ethnic Aged, for preserving the historic documents relating to the organisation's early involvement with ethnic aged care and sharing them with us. I also thank Oleksiy Romanov for having done an analysis of key historic events and policies.

I commend this history of ethnic aged care at the ECCV to you and I hope you enjoy reading it.



Marion Lau OAM JP

ECCV Deputy Chairperson

Convenor ECCV Aged Care
Policy Sub-committee



History of Ethnic Aged Care at the ECCV – Part One

I. 1978-1982

The 1980s was an exciting decade for Australian multiculturalism. The Ethnic Communities' Council (ECC) was very active in their lobbying duties and made a significant contribution to the formulation of the Home and Community Care Act (HACC Act), which was legislated in 1984/5. After multiculturalism was adopted as an official policy by federal and local Governments, it became apparent that multiculturalism also needed to be reflected in aged care policy and services delivery.

Leading up to the 1980s, the numbers of aged migrants began increasing at a considerable rate. The only available research was quite general and did not make specific recommendations for minority groups. The ECC established the Committee for the Ethnic Aged (CEA) in 1978, and to address the lack of detailed research, the Committee initiated a report titled *Ethnic Communities and Their Aged*.

Ethnic Communities and Their Aged

The report was authored by Susan Hearst and published in May 1981. Funded by the Brotherhood of St. Laurence and launched at the German Club Tivoli, this seminal publication was the first of its kind to contain such detailed recommendations for such a large mix of ethnic communities. The major finding was that few elderly migrants were able to effectively utilise community services aimed at the maintenance of physical health and independence. The major barriers listed were lack of relevant knowledge among the migrant elderly and linguistic, cultural and structural barriers. The report listed several recommendations for ethnic aged care policy:

- Financial security
- Shelter appropriate to one's age and condition
- Maintenance of physical and mental health
- Continuation and improvement of communication and information
- Occupational, social and recreational activities
- Planning (in regards to census data collection)
- Training and development of the appropriate personnel
- Research and pilot projects
- Involvement of Government and non-Government organisations

The wording of the original recommendations evolved, but the position of the Committee on key issues remained essentially the same between 1983-85. For example, the 1981 report recommends that the ABC should engage the ethnically aged with appropriate programming and broadcast the news in different languages. Of course the later documents completely omit the ABC in place of Network 0/28 and eventually the SBS.

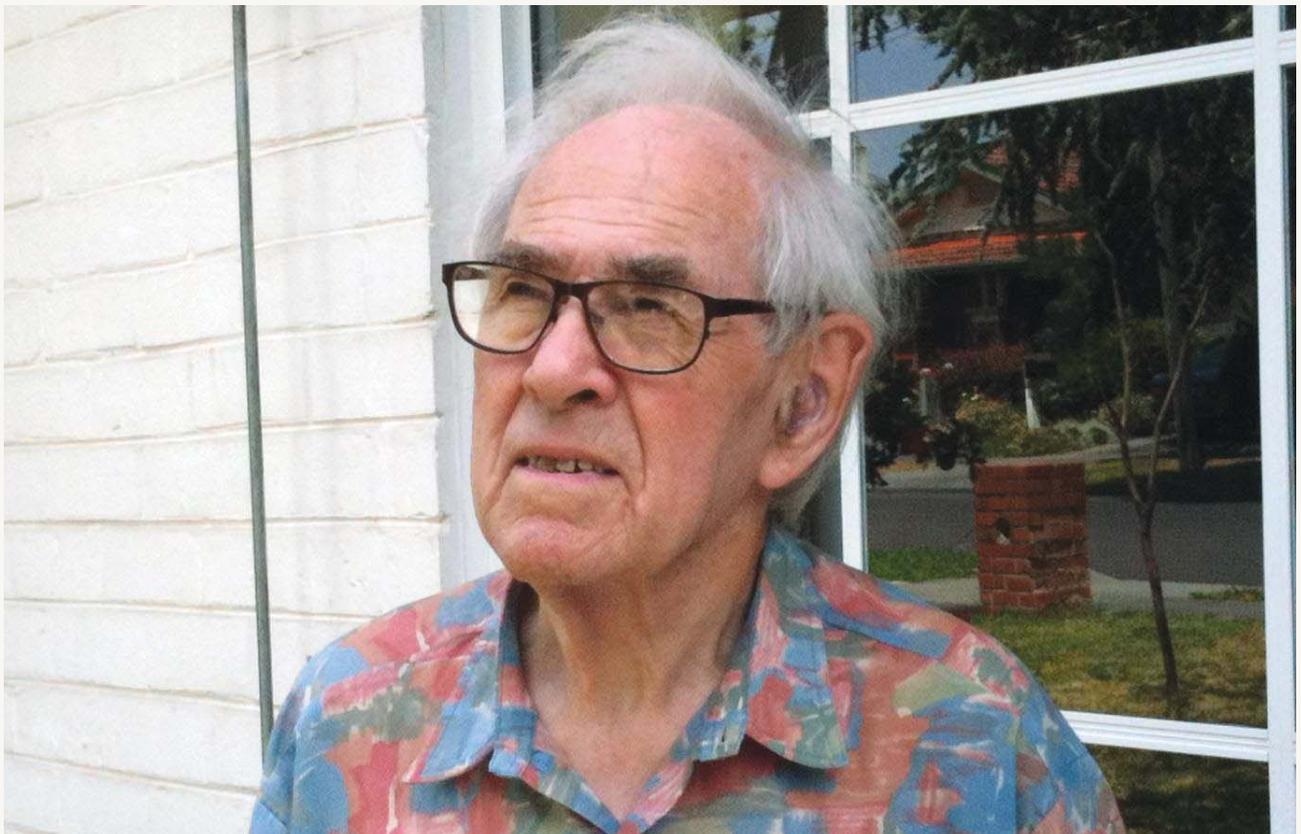


History of Ethnic Aged Care at the ECCV – Part One

II. 1983

In February 1983, at the Australian Labor Party (ALP) Health Workshop in Frankston (Victoria), the then Shadow Minister for Health Neal Blewett outlined the general philosophy of the ALP for the frail aged. This was welcomed as a significant opportunity to improve service provision and aged care programs in general. However, ethnic communities were dismayed at the absence of provisions to meet the special needs of the ethnic aged. The recommendations made in *Ethnic Communities and Their Aged* were not represented in Labor's aged care objectives.

During his speech at the opening ceremony of the 'Annual National Conference' of 1982, in the State Parliament House in Brisbane, the Hon. Mr. Mick Young MP referred to The Ethnic Community Councils as the "[T]rade unions of migrants." His comments were appreciated more by some in the room than others. But despite the important role the ECC performed, their funding was scarce. A September 1983 letter to the Department of Immigration points out that the ECC operated without "a typewriter or a filing cabinet".



Ton Westerveld, former Chairperson of the ECC Committee on the Ethnic Aged in front of his house in Surrey Hills

Community Development Officer

In November 1983, upon learning that the Victorian Minister for Health Tom Roper proposed establishing an advisory committee on the aged, the ECC, chaired by the late Anthony Bonnici, submitted a copy of *Ethnic Communities and Their Aged* along with the proposition that the committee include representatives from ethnic community organisations. Responding to Mr Roper's request for suggestions, Mr Bonnici suggested Ton Westerveld (Chairman of the Committee on the Ethnic Aged, the CEA) and Ruth Mushin, who were both members of the CEA. Ruth was hired as a Community Development Officer in August of that year, under the Grant-in-Aid funding. The Community Development Officer's objectives were:

- To assist the Committee on the Ethnic Aged in the development of policies that can be adopted and promoted by the ECCs regarding the ethnic aged.
- To plan the implementation of "Ethnic Communities and Their Aged"
- Carry out further research and provide further assistance in ethnic aged care matters.

In her new position, Ms. Mushin found that the recommendations made in "Ethnic Communities and Their Aged" were still very relevant and in need of implementation.

III. 1984

A Pension Scheme or Superannuation?

In May 1984, the CEA made a submission titled *Income Security and the Ethnic Aged* to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Welfare Inquiry into Australia's Retirement Income Systems. The submission's finding was that "the current levels of Commonwealth pensions, benefits and allowances are not adequate". The paper makes two recommendations; "[T]he choice between a pension scheme (and) a national superannuation scheme". The submission did not make a distinction between the two systems and did not recommend one more so than the other but stressed that either system was necessary for the maintenance of financial security, especially for the ethnic aged.

Meals-on-Wheels

Another important publication the ECC made that year was their response to the Report of *The Victorian Meals-on-Wheels Evaluation Committee*, which came out in November. ECC's response claims that no definition of "ethnic meals" was provided by the report and that it fails to adequately address the issues and develop proposals to improve the existing situation. The response predicts that unless appropriate strategies are developed "the ethnic aged will continue to be under-represented" as consumers of this vital service.



History of Ethnic Aged Care at the ECCV – Part One

The HACC Program and Mainstreaming

In August 1984 the Ministers for Social Security, Health, and Veteran's Affairs put out a joint press release announcing the new HACC Programme. The release promised that Commonwealth spending on general home care services will rise by 49 per cent (to \$91.8 million) over the 1984-85 period and that the HACC program "will result in a more comprehensive range of integrated community care services." This echoes Ms. Mushin's sentiment expressed in a September 1983 discussion paper that "domiciliary services do not cater for the ethnic aged ... and the establishment of parallel services is beyond the reach of most ethnic communities, the most realistic alternative is to try to change existing services."

Initially, 'mainstreaming' was adopted as government policy to aid ethnic communities that did not have the resources to establish parallel services. However over time, mainstreaming has disadvantaged the same communities. In the ECCV Submission to the Productivity Commission Research Study into the Contribution of the Not-For-Profit Sector of May 2009, mainstreaming is identified as placing new communities, which have not had a chance to develop the necessary core capacity, at a disadvantage. It points to the fact that this approach by the government has directed funding away from even the largest ethno-specific organisations and towards larger mainstream service providers such as local governments and faith-based sectors. Most importantly the "ECCV does not believe that the quality of service delivery by mainstream agencies is necessarily superior to that by multicultural or ethno-specific agencies ... ethno-specific agencies have particular strengths, such as the capacity to deliver culturally effective services through access to bilingual and bicultural staff." Mainstreaming of services needs to be supplemented with equal access to funding by all groups.

IV. Mr. Ton Westerveld, First Chairman of the ECC Committee on the Ethnic Aged

Prior to being the first Chairperson of the Committee on the Ethnic Aged, Ton was the initiator and first Chairman of what was then called the Holland-Australia Retirement Foundation. The Dutch community was a "classic example ... (of a) divided community." At one stage there were five organisations trying to help elderly Dutch migrants, all independently of each other. After witnessing firsthand the counterproductive effects of a lack of unity and disorganisation within an ethnic community, Ton decided to attend an ECC meeting in Box Hill where he displayed great passion about the issue of the ethnic elderly. Following this meeting Ton was asked to join the ECC as independent member. During a series of subsequent meetings Ton recommended the formation of a Committee for the Ethnic Aged of which he became the first Chairperson.

Reminiscing about his time on the Committee, Ton was very proud of their achievements and the work he and his colleagues put in. He has some mild regret that after “30 years, they (ECCV) are still dealing with the same issues we were dealing with back then!” He feels however, that his time could not have been put to better use. Ton identified politics as the biggest limitation on their efforts, as well as the constant battle for funding within the government. His opinion is that “They (the ECCV) have to keep trying!”

V. Conclusion

The ECCV’s continuing task throughout this period was advancing the idea that the needs of the ethnic aged were not merely the problem of ethnic communities, but rather part of the national need to provide adequate and quality services for all members of the Australian community. The election of new State (1982) and Federal (1983) Labor Governments presented a chance for the ECC to highlight the Commonwealth Government’s lack of focus on the issue of the ethnic aged and institute some positive change.

The next edition of Golden Years will feature part two of the history of ethnic aged care at the ECCV.



Oleksiy Romanov

ECCV Policy Unit, Intern



Palliative care cultural responsiveness project

In August 2013, Victorian Minister for Health, the Hon. David Davis launched the Culturally Responsive Palliative Care Community Education Project. This partnership project between ECCV, Palliative Care Victoria (PCV) and the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) aims to raise awareness of palliative care among culturally and linguistically diverse communities through culturally sensitive community education sessions.

This year long project will work specifically with the Vietnamese, Turkish, Maltese, Chinese and Italian communities.

The first step in this project has been to develop a peer education resource, which will be used to train and guide the bi-lingual health educators who will deliver these culturally responsive community education sessions. In order to tailor this resource and to make the sessions relevant to each community, the ECCV has convened five community reference groups, one for each of the communities specified above.

Over the last few months ECCV project workers have met regularly with each of the five reference groups and facilitated in-depth discussions regarding community specific perceptions of palliative care and sensitivities around life-limiting illness and end-of-life planning and processes. Representatives from local palliative care services have also attended these meetings and were able to provide accurate information about palliative care and to address any concerns or misperceptions held by reference group members.



Mike Kennedy (Palliative Care Victoria), Fatma Faruk (Australian Turkish Association), Suleyman Sahingoz, Ciler Doruk, Nadir Celil, Burhan Kinali and Betul Kinali (Australian Turkish Association)



When reflecting on their experience during this consultative phase of the project, community reference group members have observed that, before participating, they thought that palliative care services were *“not flexible and have to be in the hospital, not at home”*. It also became apparent the term ‘palliative care’ is not easily translated and has no equivalent in the language of many of the communities consulted. Other common points of discussion included:

- Concerns about disclosing a terminal diagnosis to a loved one.
- The perception that going into palliative care means that death will occur very soon, or sooner than would otherwise be the case.
- The expectation that children should be able to care for their parents, which can lead to feelings of guilt if external support is sought.
- Concerns that families will no longer have a say over the care of their loved one if palliative care services are engaged and that cultural or spiritual needs and practices will no longer have a role in this care.

When asked what they thought about palliative care services after participating in the reference group, responses included the following:

- *“Palliative care is a sensitive and professional service.”*
- *“I have learned that palliative care is not the end of the road, there is much to be done.”*
- *“Palliative care services: provide relief, provide assistance, provide support and sustain quality of life.”*
- *“It is flexible” and “provides sensitive care to a person and helps them live to the last minute.”*
- *“People should encourage their community to use the services of this organisation”*

These are some the messages that the ECCV hope to take to the wider Vietnamese, Chinese, Turkish, Italian and Maltese communities through community education sessions.

With the peer education resources now completed, bi-lingual health educators from each community will soon begin their training.

It is anticipated that 70-90, in-language, culturally specific community education sessions will take place in the first half of 2014.

For more information, or to book a community education session for your community group please contact:



Susan Timmins (Project Officer)
by email at stimmins@eccv.org.au
or by phone on: 03 9349 4122.

Funding for this project has been sourced from the Victorian Government (Department of Health), the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund, the Trust Company and Palliative Care Victoria



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