ECCV policy analysis
on
Federal election commitments
to
Seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds
June 2016

About ECCV
The Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the peak policy advocacy body for Victoria’s ethnic and multicultural communities in Victoria with a membership of 220 organisations and eight regional Ethnic Communities’ Councils (ECCs).

Background
ECCV wrote letters to the Australian Greens, Australian Labor Party, and Australian Liberal Party asking each party 5 questions in relation to their election commitment to seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds in Victoria. ECCV thanks the parties that were able to respond considering the short timeframe.

Victoria’s culturally and linguistically diverse population
According to the 2011 Census, approximately 30 percent of Victorian seniors are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Seniors of the top 10 culturally diverse ageing groups in Victoria amount to almost 140,000 people. A significant number of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds are aged pensioners. ECCV advocates for better access of seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds to ethno-specific and culturally inclusive ageing services. For details, see ECCV Multicultural Aged Care Strategy.

Key election issues and responses

Digital literacy
A. Labor has indicated to pursue a national information policy to ensure optimal data generation, protection, access and use (Please access Labor’s statement here).

B. The Coalition will continue to invest in digital technology to boost innovation in government and improve the quality and accessibility of government services (Please access Coalition’s policy on digital services here).

C. The Greens recognise that the increasing uptake of digital technology threatens to exclude seniors and especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds. It is important to the Australian Greens that everyone has access to the benefits of digital technologies, which is why the Australian Greens will instate a Digital Rights Commissioner to work out of the Australian Human Rights Commission (Access Greens response to ECCV here).
Culturally inclusive aged care

A. The Australian Labor Party has committed to establishing a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Aged Care Fund. It will provide funding towards new facilities, and upgrades and improvements to existing facilities that service ethnic communities throughout Australia. This Fund, will support aged care facilities which ensure older Australians from CALD backgrounds are in an environment where the language, food and surroundings are familiar (Access Labor’s press release here).

B. The Turnbull Coalition it committed to improving the lives of all Australians, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (See response to FECCA’s election ask here).

C. The Greens have stated that cultural diversity is an essential part of our society, so services to the community must reflect that. The Australian Greens strongly support cultural diversity, and want to see all aspects of aged care, including the Commonwealth Home Support Programme, reflect and cater for the rich diversity of our community (Access Greens response to ECCV here).

MyAgedCare

A. A Labor government will address ongoing problems in the My Aged Care gateway in the first 100 days of Government, in consultation with the aged care sector, consumers and medical and allied health providers (Access Labor’s press release here).

B. The Turnbull Government will continue to deliver consumer-centred aged care services, with reforms that will improve access in rural and remote locations, as well as $136.6 million to ensure the My Aged Care contact centre can meet rapidly growing demand (For more information, click here).

C. The Greens highlighted that better investment in government services infrastructure, such as the MyAgedCare system, will facilitate better access to services for all seniors, and is especially important for those of non-English speaking backgrounds (Access Australian Greens response to ECCV here).

Age pension

A. The Australian Labor party has pledged to stand up for pensioners and ensure Australia has a fair pension system that remains both adequate and sustainable. A Labor Government will scrap the Turnbull’s Government plans to reduce the period of time pensioners can spend overseas and keep their full pension (Access Labor’s election statement on pension system here).

B. The Greens have consistently opposed unfair cuts to the age pension and changing the age of eligibility. The Australian Greens will establish an independent Equality Commission to provide independent advice to the Government and Parliament on setting rates of income support including the age pension (Access Australian Greens response to ECCV here).

For more information, please contact ECCV Aged Care Policy Officer and Golden Years editor Nikolaus Rittinghausen on 03 9349 4122 and email nrittinghausen@eccv.org.au.