



**ethnic  
communities'  
council of  
victoria**

# **Reclaiming Respect and Dignity: Elder Abuse Prevention in Ethnic Communities**

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ECCV Policy Discussion Paper March 2009

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) Inc. was established in 1974 as a voluntary community based organisation.

It is now a broadly based, statewide, peak advocacy body representing ethnic and multicultural communities in Victoria.

The ECCV's role includes supporting, consulting, liaising with and providing information to Victoria's ethnic communities. The ECCV delivers policy projects for key partners in areas like multicultural policy, aged care programs and skilled migration strategies.

The ECCV's Aged Care Policy Committee is comprised of key stakeholders in the multicultural aged care sector. It is a strategic forum on Victorian aged care in the ethnic sector both as an information conduit and an advocacy group.

The Committee plays a strong role in maintaining quality aged care services in the ethnic sector and acts as a consultative body for State and Federal government reviews into aged care and related issues.

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Key elder abuse prevention strategies arising from ECCV situational analysis of the ethnic aged care sector

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## FOREWORD

A large part of the problem in identifying and addressing instances of personal abuse – whether it be against children, spouses, or elders – is the term itself. Few people like to think of themselves as perpetrators of abuse, particularly against family members, and few people like to think of themselves as victims of abuse committed by family members. So incidents go unreported or under-reported, a blind-eye is turned and assistance for the parties involved is not sought; assistance which may be quite easily attained and make the world of difference.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for difficulties experienced within inter-personal relationships to be even less likely to be reported among migrant and multicultural communities. A host of added social and cultural factors further complicate the already delicate interplay of personal and familial aspirations, expectations and obligations. Since its formation, it has been one of the primary goals of the ECCV Elder Abuse Working Group to make migrant and mainstream communities, service providers and policy makers more aware of the many complexities of these issues as they relate to the appropriate care of elders in our society.

As the following Discussion Paper outlines, the issues are many and more nuanced than many might expect at first glance. Likewise, the recommendations also stress the need to handle incidents in a manner that recognises the sensitivities of the parties involved and achieves the optimum outcome without undesired consequences. Whether this involves provision of counseling or criminal prosecution, the key must be to maintain, or if necessary restore, the dignity of some of society's most vulnerable individuals.

Many thanks go to the members of the ECCV Elder Abuse Working Group for their valuable contribution to this Discussion Paper. Their enthusiastic team work as well as their insightful and sensitive understanding of elder abuse issues has made a difference to improving the quality of life of culturally and linguistically diverse seniors.

I also express my appreciation to the older and not-so-old individuals in our community, some of whom have shown immense strength and courage, for sharing their experiences of relationship hardships and difficulties as a result of ill-treatment or neglect. These are often difficult and troubling issues to confront and I hope the publication of this Discussion Paper will encourage those at the frontline of aged care and the highest echelons of power fulfil their commitment to do so with wisdom and sensitivity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marion Lau', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Ms Marion Lau OAM JP  
Chairperson  
ECCV Aged Care Committee

## Executive Summary

This policy paper has been developed in response to the increasing participation of State Government departments in developing elder abuse prevention initiatives. In addition there is a growing awareness that overseas-born older people are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect. The barriers to accessing aged care services they experience and some cultural expectations cloud their understanding of what constitutes mistreatment and of their individual rights to dignity and wellbeing.

Statistical data on elder abuse in the community, and in particular in the ethnic sector, is limited. Whilst the prevalence of abuse and neglect is broadly estimated as fewer than 5% of the society, the escalating care needs of the increasing ethnic ageing population has brought to the surface several instances of suspected misconduct in the ethnic community.

ECCV has conducted an in-depth situational analysis of elder abuse issues in the ethnic sector. Through broad-based consultation the Council has highlighted the strengths of ethnic and multicultural organisations in building trust with culturally diverse families and communities; the challenges faced by ethnic seniors due to lack of awareness of what abuse is; and valuable opportunities for the ethnic infrastructure to provide culturally competent expertise in elder abuse prevention. Key strategies, objectives and recommendations have emerged within the framework of human rights principles and empowerment models.

These recommendations include:

- The development of culturally and linguistically appropriate community education campaigns for the ethnic ageing community to raise awareness and understanding of elder abuse and neglect, and personal rights.
- The development of staff training and policy protocols in ethno-specific agencies and multicultural organisations based on a survey of staff needs in relation to identification of suspected abuse, culturally responsive action and referrals.
- Appropriate resource allocation for the ethnic welfare and multicultural organisations to facilitate elder abuse prevention in the ethnic sector.
- Effective dissemination of current Victorian Government training and policy guidelines initiatives to existing ethnic aged care networks.

The goal of this paper is to help progress much needed open discussion on elder abuse prevention within the ethnic community service organisations, families and carers. It also highlights valuable opportunities for capitalising on the cultural expertise of ethnic welfare and community-based service organisations to ensure the dignity and wellbeing of ethnic seniors.

## **Introduction: The Hidden Issue**

Elder abuse and neglect are hidden issues of growing importance in the Victorian ethnic community. Broad-based ECCV consultation and research (ECCV 2009<sup>i</sup>) established that the vast majority of families and carers genuinely want the best for their elderly relatives in the ethnic community. A great deal of goodwill exists within these culturally diverse families.

Existing data on elder abuse is fairly limited. Australian studies estimate prevalence across the general population from below 1% to 5%<sup>ii</sup>. Those statistics are considered to be under-estimations due to non-reporting stemming from loyalty to families and fear of consequences. Both anecdotal and surveyed data includes the wide definition of 'known' and 'suspected' elder abuse.

There is no reliable statistical data available on the incidence and prevalence of elder abuse in the ethnic sector in Victoria. ECCV confidently provides information on elder abuse issues as a result of recent broad-based consultations in 2008 and 2009 which highlighted increasing case studies of suspected elder abuse in the community as distinct from residential care facilities.

Older people may be more vulnerable to abuse because of physical and/or mental impairment. This vulnerability may be increased when language and cultural barriers are added to the equation. Some older people may not know, or be able to take the most basic, practical and preventative measures such as understanding how to make contact with the police and legal systems (ECCV Submission 2007)<sup>iii</sup>.

Interstate surveys<sup>iv</sup> indicate a marked higher rate of abuse amongst females and those in the oldest groups. In the general population the vulnerability of older people was illustrated by higher estimates of abuse among people with decision-making disability and those with significant physical disabilities.

International studies<sup>v</sup> indicate that staff training in elder abuse issues promotes positive professional practices. It helps give workers confidence and skills in defusing potentially volatile situations, clarify expectations with respect to acceptable conduct toward clients, alert workers to the penalties for abuse, and helps them cope with the inevitable stresses associated with contacting clients at home.

## **Definition of Elder Abuse**

Elder abuse covers a range of behaviours. Abuse and neglect are typically carried out by someone close to the older person, with whom they have a relationship implying trust. This may be family members such as spouses, adult children, grandchildren, siblings, other family members, friends or carers and may be perpetrated as a result of ignorance, negligence or deliberate intent (Cooney 2005:13)<sup>vi</sup>.

Mistreatment of older people may be financial, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and social. Neglect and failure to provide the older person with life necessities is considered a form of elder abuse. Suspected elder abuse in the form of neglect in the ethnic community may result from carer burnout and be unintended. Suspected financial abuse was reported by ethnic representatives at ECCV consultation forums as one of the most common forms of abuse amongst culturally and linguistically diverse older people.

Extensive feedback from the ethnic welfare and community service agencies indicated that the concept of elder abuse and neglect is not well understood in the ethnic community. As more ageing people will stay at home in the community it is important to preserve their rights, dignity and independence.

The terminology associated with abuse is as wide and varied as it is highly emotive: mistreatment, maltreatment, neglect, insults, intimidation, manipulation, exploitation, assault, cruelty, extortion,

molestation. Mistreatment of older people is largely under-recognised and therefore the nature of abuse is sometimes not well understood. For clarification purposes a sample case scenario and various examples of the different types of abuse and neglect (financial, physical, emotional/psychological and social) of seniors are provided in Appendix 1 (see page 19).

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are affirmed by the Victorian Charter of Human Rights:

### **Policy Development**

1. That ECCV continue to represent the ethnic aged care sector on Victorian Government initiatives to develop elder abuse prevention strategies.
2. That the Victorian Government ensures that policy guidelines on elder abuse prevention are disseminated to broad networks of ethno-specific welfare and community-based service agencies and multicultural organisations beyond the Primary Care Partners (PCPs) network.
3. That the Victorian Government facilitates sustainable local area networks between ethno-specific and multicultural organisations and the Primary Care Partners (PCPs) network for the purposes of effective dissemination of elder abuser prevention strategies.

### **Education**

4. That the Victorian Government facilitates a survey of the training needs of staff in ethno-specific and multicultural organisations concerning the identification of suspected elder abuse; culturally appropriate response requirements; and the building of cultural competency in relation to mistreatment of older people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
5. That ECCV conducts a series of introductory seminars to raise awareness of elder abuse in culturally and linguistically diverse communities, targeted at staff in the ethnic aged care service sector.
6. That the Victorian Government facilitates awareness raising education campaigns about elder abuse concepts targeted at ethnic seniors, in particular ethnic senior citizens clubs, and the multicultural community.
7. That culturally appropriate language is used for community education about the mistreatment of culturally and linguistically diverse seniors, families and carers.
8. That the Victorian Government, with advice from ECCV, facilitates the translation of information sheets to raise awareness of elder abuse prevention for distribution to culturally and linguistically diverse older people and multicultural agencies.
9. That the Victorian Government provides the opportunity for customised development of elder abuse training and education programs according to specific cultural and linguistic needs and attitudes.
10. That Victorian Government provides training targeted at ethnic service providers with a focus on identification, assessment and referral of suspected elder abuse amongst culturally diverse people in the community.

11. That the Office of Senior Victorians (OSV) includes a broad network of ethno-specific and multicultural organisations beyond Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) in its communication strategies of Elder Abuse Prevention Training Kits.
12. That Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) incorporate a unit on elder abuse within the framework of cultural diversity in courses for Certificates III and IV in HACC and Aged Care Work.

### **Strategic Alliances**

13. That the Victorian Government facilitates the provision of education sessions for mainstream aged care and healthcare service providers on culturally competent strategies for dealing with elder abuse amongst ethnic groups through existing expertise in ethno-specific and multicultural organisations.
14. That providers of Certificate Courses in Aged Care such as TAFE colleges and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) form sustainable alliances with ethno-specific welfare and community-based organisations for the provision of culturally diverse expertise on elder abuse prevention in the ethnic community.

### **Resources**

15. That the Victorian Government allocates resources to ECCV to act as an umbrella organisation for distribution to ethno-specific agencies and multicultural organisations for the development of culturally and linguistically customised elder abuse preventions strategies in the ethnic aged care sector.
16. That the Victorian Government provides support for education and training of three groups:
  - staff working in the ethnic aged care sector
  - older culturally diverse people living in the community, their families and their carers
  - generic service providers in the form of cultural briefings

### **Causes for Concern**

Concern in the ethnic sector about the increasing incidence of unreported and suspected elder abuse stems from the following factors:

- The ethnic ageing population is increasing. By 2011 38% of people over 65 in Melbourne will be from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and 31% in Victoria <sup>(viii)</sup>.
- Ethno-specific welfare and community services agencies are the preferred point of contact of culturally diverse seniors for aged care services<sup>ix</sup>. Those agencies have indicated the need for staff training and guidelines in relation to elder abuse identification, appropriate responses and referrals.
- The strong preference for culturally and linguistically diverse older people to remain in the community rather than seek institutional care<sup>x</sup>.
- Ethnic older people experience difficulties of access to mainstream aged care services due to cultural and linguistic barriers.
- Higher levels of dementia and depression exist in the ethnic aged community<sup>xi</sup>.
- Carer burnout in the ethnic community often results from reluctance to access aged care services.

- Data on the incidence and prevalence of elder abuse across the community in general is limited or outdated. There is sparse specific data on elder abuse and neglect in the ethnic community.

## Current Empowerment Initiatives

The Victorian Government through the Office of Senior Victorians (OSV) within the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) is leading a whole-of-government approach to the prevention of elder abuse in the community. The OSV has undertaken initiatives in the form of broad-based community consultancies on elder abuse prevention. The focus of Victorian government departments is on empowerment of the individual and cultural responsiveness of services.

The main focus of the OSV Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy (EAPS) is to raise awareness amongst older people in the community. The EAPS communication strategy includes the development of elder abuse prevention guidelines, a statewide professional education strategy and training tools, financial literacy information sessions, ethnic radio, the general media, and a community awareness program delivered by Primary Care Partnerships.

ECCV convenes the Elder Abuse Working Group, established in 2008, as a sub-committee of its Aged Care Policy Committee in May 2008 to provide advice on training needs and policy development in relation to elder abuse prevention.

ECCV produced an interim report entitled *Elder Abuse Working Group S.C.O.R.E. Card Analysis – Report to ECCV Aged Care Committee December 2008* which identified current issues, resources and expertise in the ethnic aged care sector and provided a focus on future directions.

In 2008 and 2009 ECCV representatives participated in the Office of Senior Victorians (OSV) Elder Abuse Prevention Advisory Group and consultations on the Elder Abuse Prevention Professional Development Strategy Project.

Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV), a free service to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights, dignity and independence of older Victorians was launched by the Minister for Senior Victorians in April 2008. It provides telephone information and referral; advocacy and support; legal services; and community and professional education but is not yet well-known by service providers.

In August 2008 a representative from the SRV, Community Education Unit delivered a presentation to the ECCV Elder Abuse Working Group.

In 2007-2008 ECCV representatives participated in the consultation conducted by the Department of Human Services (DHS) on the DHS Aged Care Preventing Abuse of Older People Guide.

In October 2007 ECCV included a comprehensive statement on elder abuse and positive ageing in the *ECCV Draft Community Care Standards: Minimum Performance Criteria* that was submitted to the Victorian and Australian Governments. ECCV called upon the Commonwealth to develop a nationally consistent strategy to respond to elder abuse in the community aged care sector. In addition the Council advocated for the development of Minimum Performance Criteria in preventing and responding to suspected cases of elder abuse within the ethnic community aged care sector.

ECCV is aware that an extensive network of ethno-specific welfare and community service agencies exists in the ethnic aged care sector beyond the PCPs model. Those ethnic agencies have well-

established relationships of trust and with vulnerable older culturally diverse people living at home and would benefit from access to government guidelines and strategies on elder abuse prevention.

## **Human Rights Framework**

ECCV has embraced a Human Rights framework to protect the rights of vulnerable ethnic seniors. To improve the life opportunities of those culturally and linguistically diverse seniors at risk of abuse or neglect their needs align with the four rights listed in the Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*:

### **Protection of families and children**

Families, as the fundamental group unit in society, are entitled to be protected by society and the State.

### **Cultural rights**

People with a particular cultural, religious, racial or linguistic background have the right to enjoy their culture, declare and practice their religion and use their language.

### **Property rights**

A person must not be deprived of his or her property except in accordance with the law.

### **Humane treatment when deprived of liberty**

Persons deprived of liberty must be treated with humanity and with respect for their inherent human dignity.

## **ECCV Situational Needs Analysis on Elder Abuse Issues**

ECCV, via the Elder Abuse Working Group, conducted a broad-based situational needs analysis from September to December 2008 via the S.C.O.R.E. Card technique to assess Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Risks and future Expectations in the ethnic aged community in relation to elder abuse prevention.

The subsequent report *Elder Abuse Working Group S.C.O.R.E. Card Analysis – Report to ECCV Aged Care Committee December 2008* identified current issues, resources and expertise in the ethnic sector from the community perspective. It provided a useful focus on directions and planning elder abuse prevention strategies in the ethnic sector.

## **Background to ECCV Situational Analysis**

ECCV established the Elder Abuse Working Group in May 2008 in response to the growing numbers of older people in the ethnic community living at home and anecdotal evidence about unreported elder abuse involving culturally and linguistically diverse seniors.

The Working Group is a sub-committee of the ECCV Aged Care Policy Committee which is comprised of key stakeholders in the multicultural aged care sector. The Aged Care Committee is a strategic forum on Victorian aged care in the ethnic sector both as an information conduit and an advocacy group. It plays a strong role in maintaining quality aged care services in the ethnic sector and acts as a consultative body for State and Federal Government reviews into aged care and related issues.

The brief of the ECCV Elder Abuse Working Group is to develop a strategic plan:

- To gain a clear picture of the incidence of elder abuse and identify related factors for abuse of culturally and linguistically diverse older Victorians.

- To raise awareness of elder abuse among ethnic older Victorians, their families and service providers dealing with multicultural communities.
- To ensure that service providers have the capacity to identify, investigate and respond to elder abuse of older ethnic Victorians in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way.

## **Ethnic Sector Consultation**

Organisations consulted by ECCV for the situational analysis on elder abuse issues in the culturally and linguistically diverse community, represented European, Middle Eastern and Asian communities; ethno-specific and multicultural organisations; peak bodies in aged care; and the rural and metropolitan area (see Appendix 2, page 20).

Outcomes of the ethnic sector situational analysis illustrated considerable expertise in dealing with vulnerable people, highlighted challenges and opportunities and raised concerns. It set up a framework of key strategies.

## **Strengths in the Victorian Ethnic Sector**

- Diverse ethno-specific and multicultural community-based organisations have good rapport and well-established networks of trust within the culturally diverse ageing population, in particular with vulnerable groups.
- Ethno-specific and multicultural community-based organisations have developed highly effective working networks within the aged care services sector.
- The ethnic services sector has highly developed professional skills and knowledge in cultural competencies that can be shared with other mainstream organisations.
- Ethnic welfare and community-based service organisations have the expertise to educate generic providers about cultural issues.
- Some ethnic organisations have developed elder abuse prevention policies and commenced bilingual community awareness raising programs.
- Some multicultural organisations have active international links on elder abuse prevention with groups in the UK and USA.

## **Strengths of the ECCV Elder Abuse Working Group**

- ECCV and the Elder Abuse Working Group have well-established links with related government departments and professional organisations on issues of elder abuse prevention.
- Ethno-specific and multicultural member organisations of the ECCV Elder Abuse Working Group have the cultural competency expertise to participate in ethnic community-based education campaigns.
- ECCV and Elder Abuse Working Group support the concept that awareness brings empowerment in the culturally and linguistically diverse community.
- ECCV via the Aged Care Committee and its Elder Abuse Working Group sub-committee represents a strategic communication avenue for elder abuse prevention initiatives coming from governments.
- The ECCV Elder Abuse Working Group participated in the OSV consultancy on its current Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy.

## **Challenges of Elder Abuse in Culturally Diverse Communities**

ECCV consultations during the S.C.O.R.E. situational analysis revealed the following challenges in the ethnic sector concerning suspected elder abuse:

Cultural considerations such as ethnic backgrounds, beliefs and experiences may shape people's perceptions about abuse in the ethnic community. There is a need to address entrenched culture and gender issues. Community knowledge of elder abuse is influenced by stigma and shame. Elder abuse remains one of the hidden issues because cultural taboos prohibit open discussion in communities and families.

Elder abuse awareness programs need to be customized to reflect the special cultural and linguistic needs of specific ethnic groups. Ethno-specific agencies are a useful resource as their staff are familiar with the need to arrange for translators or speakers with special language skills; adapt materials for persons with limited language or literacy skills; and can easily identify additional cultural competencies.

Social isolation of non-English speaking elderly leads to greater dependency on their families.

Ethnic seniors are at greater risk of abuse because of poor English language skills which sometimes prevent them from fully understanding official documents.

Recognition of dementia, abuse, neglect and rights of culturally diverse clients with little or no English language is difficult. Under-utilization of professional interpreters may be a form of neglect. Ethnic seniors are more vulnerable to abuse.

Abuse and neglect are largely hidden because of lack of awareness and understanding of what abuse is. There is a lack of knowledge in the ethnic community about individual rights in the aged care community.

Complexities exist in dealing with the cycle of abuse in the culturally diverse community. Workers at ethno-specific agencies have found that lack of skills in teasing out the cultural and abuse issues by staff in generic organisations result in unsatisfactory judgment of culturally and linguistically diverse situations. Frequently inappropriate assessment is made concerning abuse or neglect without understanding all the cultural issues.

Cultural family expectations are sometimes related to suspected elder abuse. Cultural family expectations about wealth inheritance sometimes conflict with individual rights of ethnic seniors. Cultural obligations and responsibilities of both the parents and adult children are very strong in culturally diverse families. The perception that adult children are responsible for the decision making concerning their frail elderly parents may interfere with the older person's rights.

## **Opportunities for the Ethnic Sector**

Opportunities exist for accessing existing ethnic infrastructure via ECCV:

- The ECCV Elder Abuse Working Group is a key-player in raising community awareness on elder abuse prevention from a culturally and linguistically diverse perspective.
- The ECCV Working Group and ECCV Aged Care Committee are strategically placed to influence policy and change in the sector because they form a direct point of contact with representatives in Victoria's ethnic communities and peak bodies with a related interest.

Opportunities exist for the provision of policy guidelines in the ethnic sector via existing networks of ethno-specific welfare and multicultural organisations beyond PCPs.

Critical needs are:

- Guidelines for ethnic agencies in responding to suspected abuse in the culturally diverse families.

- Education and training for staff in ethno-specific agencies for dealing with suspected elder abuse in the ethnic community.

Opportunities exist for capitalising on the high levels of cultural competency expertise in ethno-specific and multicultural agencies in the delivery of elder abuse prevention awareness programs to the ethnic older people living at home and their carers and families.

Specific needs are:

- Increased awareness of financial choices amongst culturally diverse older people living in the community.
- General elder abuse prevention awareness campaigns in the multicultural community.
- Customised delivery of OSV elder abuse prevention education programs in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way using existing resources and expertise in the ethnic sector.

## **Points of Concern for Ethnic Organisations**

A discussion of the risk factors in the S.C.OR.E. situational analysis, highlighted the following areas of concern:

- ECCV recognises that the networking model of PCPs in servicing mutual geographically defined areas does not correspond with the diverse catchments areas of many ethno-specific agencies. Whilst a number of ethno-specific service providers participate in PCP meetings, the PCP model does not align with the diverse areas of many ethno-specific agencies.
- The ethnic sector is at risk of being excluded from discussions on policy development, action plans and service delivery in the area of elder abuse. The ethnic sector is not consistently connected to the PCPs model of consultations. Some ethno-specific agencies lack the resources to actively engage in PCP initiatives. Due to the rapidly increasing numbers of clients with culturally and linguistically diverse aged care needs, some multicultural workers are pressed to direct their resources wholly to servicing culturally diverse clients.
- ECCV plays a key role in the liaison between government departments and stakeholders in the ethnic sector who are confronted with suspected elder abuse in the context of cultural diversity.
- Multicultural older people with little or no English are particularly vulnerable and have significant barriers to accessing assistance in situations of abuse. Ethno-specific service providers are frequently the only point of trust for highly disadvantaged older seniors.
- The ethnic sector welcomes opportunities for participation in departmental consultation reviews, qualitative data collection and the chance to provide advice to mainstream agencies. Past experience indicates, however, that a plethora of over-consultation of ethno-specific agencies and multicultural services by mainstream providers often resulted in drawing on their expertise and resources with no feedback of tangible outcomes.
- It is crucial to note the wide ranging definitions of elder abuse (such as physical, psychological, financial, sexual, social and/or neglect) and the need to make assessments in the context of a culturally diverse framework. As a result a broad range of areas need to be covered in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way.
- Lack of understanding of the cultural expectations and traditions may lead to inappropriate treatment of suspected abuse in the ethnic community. There is a need to treat vulnerable

elderly ethnic people who may be victims of abuse or neglect with dignity and respect rather than shame, particularly where issues become public in closed culturally diverse communities.

- There is a need to use sensitive and appropriate language in the multicultural community e.g. to reframe expressions like abuse in positive terms such as “mistreatment of older people”.

## **Key Strategies**

The outcomes of the SCORE Card consultation on **Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Risks** and future **Expectations** for responding appropriately to suspected elder abuse in the ethnic community, were grouped into four Key Strategic Areas as follows:

1. Policy Development
2. Education
3. Strategic Alliances
4. Resources

These are expanded into the following framework:

Key Strategy	Objective	Recommended Action
<b>1. Policy Development</b>	Ethnic sector to participate in policy development and influence reform on elder abuse prevention issues for culturally and linguistically diverse seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECCV to represent the ethnic sector to advocate all levels of government on elder abuse needs in the culturally diverse community</li> <li>• Ensure access by ethnic welfare organisations to Victorian government policies and resources</li> <li>• Disseminate information and strategies for dealing with elder abuse via an open public forum at ECCV</li> <li>• Advocate for culturally and linguistically diverse inclusive strategies at the Office of Senior Victorians (OSV) and the Department of Human Services (DHS)</li> </ul>
<b>2. Education</b>	Provide Elder Abuse Prevention education for three groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff in ethnic welfare and service organisations</li> <li>• Ethnic communities and families to increase awareness of Elder Abuse concepts and older people's rights</li> <li>• Cultural briefings for generic service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey needs of workers in ethnic welfare and service organisations re elder abuse prevention training issues</li> <li>• Conduct an ECCV forum series throughout 2009</li> <li>• Advocate for elder abuse prevention awareness in the ethnic community</li> </ul>
<b>3. Strategic Alliances</b>	To strengthen and utilise strategic alliances between the ethnic sector and generic services as well as all levels of government	Develop strategic alliances between ECCV and ethnic welfare and service agencies with OSV, DHS, Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV), Elder Abuse Prevention Association (EAPA), Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) State Trustees, VCAT and Guardianship agencies and RTOs
<b>4. Resources</b>	Advocate for support and resources for elder abuse prevention education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct ECCV public forums on elder abuse awareness</li> <li>• Advocate all levels of government for the provision of funding grants for elder abuse education and training</li> <li>• Access support for two distinct target groups for education and training, namely: ethnic welfare and community services staff as well as ethnic older people, their families and carers</li> </ul>

**Table 1** Key elder abuse prevention strategies arising from ECCV situational analysis of the ethnic aged care sector

## Conclusion

Elder abuse is a hidden issue in the increasing ethnic aged population. Older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect because of barriers to accessing services and support.

Vulnerable multicultural seniors, according to the Victorian Charter of Human Rights, deserve the protection of their family relationships, cultural preferences, property and dignity through the culturally and linguistically appropriate prevention of elder abuse and neglect. Concepts such as elder abuse are not readily understood or known by people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Consequently they require education to raise their awareness and understanding. Education sessions need to be delivered via networks of trust such as ethno-specific welfare and community service organisations.

Several empowerment models of elder abuse prevention are currently being developed by the Office of Senior Victorians, Seniors Rights Victoria and the Department of Human Services. ECCV has been appropriately consulted. It is crucial that the Victorian Government initiatives on elder abuse prevention incorporate the ethnic sector in its communication and implementation strategies.

ECCV has conducted an in-depth situational analysis on the strengths, challenges and opportunities in the Victorian ethnic sector in relation to elder abuse issues. Specific future directions and recommendations emerged regarding training and policy development.

Staff in ethno-specific welfare and community services agencies, require training to identify and respond to suspected mistreatment of older ethnic people. Ethnic and multicultural organisations need to develop their own protocols and policy guidelines for responding to suspected elder abuse in the ethnic community. The current State Government initiatives will provide useful resources in terms of training and policy guidelines.

The existing network of Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) forms one avenue for the communication for government initiatives. That network is not an effective means for accessing all ethnic sector organisations because they do not align with the ethnic sector network and only have partial ethnic sector representation.

Ethno-specific welfare and community-based organisations have established effective relationships of trust with multicultural seniors in the community and therefore have a significant role to play in the implementation of State elder abuse prevention initiatives.

Opportunities exist for using the ethnic and multicultural agencies as a resource for cultural competency training by generic service providers and Registered Training Organisations.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the positive reframing of concepts around elder abuse in translations to reflect the dignity and respect of older people in the ethnic communities.

## **Appendix 1 Sample Case Scenarios**

The following case scenarios and abuse examples were supplied by Office of Senior Victorians (OSV) and Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) April 2009

### **Case Study 1**

Svetlana is 89 years of age, and since her husband's death seven years ago, has lived on her own. She has three children who live interstate and visit infrequently. Several months ago, she fell and broke a hip. Following an operation and a period in rehab, she was ready to return home with some support services.

Just prior to leaving hospital, her son, Ivan who had been living in interstate, advised the hospital that he would move into his mother's home and take care of her. Following an assessment by an occupational therapist, Svetlana was discharged from hospital into the care of Ivan. She was also to receive a few hours of home help each week from the local council.

Svetlana has few friends, mainly due to her CALD background and limited English, but has a good relationship with her neighbour, Jan, whom she has known for twenty years. Prior to the operation, Jan visited Svetlana each week to chat about their shared love of gardening.

Since Svetlana returned home from hospital Jan has found visiting her increasingly difficult as Ivan would often tell Svetlana to be quiet and occasionally yell at her. Ivan also seemed uncomfortable with Jan's visits. Eventually Jan stopped visiting but became concerned when she had not seen Svetlana in her garden for over a week although her routine was to tend to her tomato plants several times during the week. She rang the local council as she knew that they were visiting Svetlana but due to privacy reasons, could not help her. Jan tried visiting Svetlana, but Ivan said she was unwell. A week later a For Sale sign was erected on the property.

### **Financial Abuse example**

Mrs. B now lives in an aged care facility. When her husband died her daughter convinced her that the family home was too big and that she should move to Canberra to be closer to the family. The daughter asked her mother to sign a Power of Attorney explaining to her that she did not need to worry about finances. The legal circumstances were never explained to Mrs. B. The daughter sold Mrs. B's home without her knowledge and invested the money in her own home.

### **Physical Abuse example**

Mrs M's son doesn't hit her but he pushes her occasionally. If he comes home in a bad mood he will often yell at Mrs. M and shove her when she gets in his way. When she is driving he grabs the steering wheel. He threatens her and she fears that she will be hurt.

### **Emotional/psychological Abuse example**

Mr. C has been living with his son and his family for over 2 years. During this time there has been ongoing family conflict. His son constantly says that he is a failure and has lived his life badly. He yells at Mr. C and always threatens to put him in an aged care home. He has thought about going to the police about the threats but doesn't want his son to get into trouble.

### **Social Abuse example**

Mrs. A remarried five years ago and moved to a country town. Her husband doesn't like her family visiting and won't allow Mrs. A to contact them. He censors anything the family has to say and always has negative things to say about them.

Mrs. A's friends are made to feel unwelcome when they visit. She doesn't see her friends as often as she used to. Some are not so keen to visit anymore. Her husband is making it difficult for her to keep up a social life. Mrs. A is starting to feel isolated and detached from her social networks.

### **Neglect example**

Mrs. P is an 86 year old woman with significant health needs, who lives with her husband. She has no other family and finds it hard to see her friends. Her husband will often be away for most of the day, leaving Mrs. P without a carer to distribute her medication or prepare adequate meals for her. Mrs. P also had a fall recently and has been complaining of pain in her leg. Her husband is reluctant to take her to the doctor because he doesn't have the time

## **Appendix 2 Organisations Consulted**

The ECCV 2008-09 situational analysis on elder abuse in the culturally and linguistically diverse community in Victoria consulted representatives from the following groups and organisations:

- Aged and Community Care Victoria
- Australian Croatian Community Services, Dandenong
- Australian Croatian Community Services, Footscray
- Australian Greek Welfare Society
- Australian Polish Community Services
- Bellarine Community Health
- Chinese-speaking Communities
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
- Regional Information and Advocacy Council, Shepparton
- Victorian Arabic Social Services
- Wesley Disability Community Services, Dandenong

## References

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- <sup>i</sup> *Unready, Unwilling and Ageing – Ethnic baby Boomers and their Parents*, ECCV Policy Discussion Paper 2009
- <sup>ii</sup> *Elder Abuse in Western Australia*, report of survey conducted for Department for Communities, Government of Western Australia, Office for Seniors Interest and Carers Freemasons Centre For Research Into Aged Care Services, June 2002
- <sup>iii</sup> Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria October 2007, *ECCV Submission to the Draft Community Care Standards: Minimum Performance Criteria*
- <sup>iv</sup> *Elder Abuse in Western Australia*, report of survey conducted for Department for Communities, Government of Western Australia, Office for Seniors Interest and Carers, Freemasons Centre For Research Into Aged Care Services June 2002
- <sup>v</sup> National Center on Elder Abuse Washington, D.C., 2002 *Developing Training Programs on Elder Abuse Prevention for In-Home Helpers Issues and Guidelines* by Lisa Nerenberg, Produced by the Institute on Aging (formerly Goldman Institute on Aging) San Francisco, California
- <sup>vi</sup> Cooney, Barney, 2006, p13 *Strengthening Victoria's Response to Elder Abuse Report of the Report of the Elder Abuse Prevention Project*, Department of Human Services
- <sup>vii</sup> Howe, A. (2006). *Cultural diversity, ageing and HACC: trends in Victoria in the next 15 years*. Melbourne: Department of Human Services
- <sup>viii</sup> *Review of Literature Concerning the Delivery of Community Aged Care Services to Ethnic Groups – Mainstream versus ethno-specific services: it's not an either-or*, prepared for Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria by Healthy Ageing Research Unit, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University 2008
- <sup>ix</sup> Op cit *Review of Literature: it's not an either-or*
- <sup>x</sup> Op cit *Review of Literature: it's not an either-or*
- <sup>xi</sup> Kingsbury, Rachell & Thode, Karen DBMAS (Dementia Behaviour Advisory Service) Vic presentation at Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV), The Ageing Mind Forum 16 October 2008

