



16 May 2007

**ECCV Submission to the Discussion paper,  
*Towards a New Blueprint for Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Treatment  
Services***

## **1. Introduction**

ECCV is the state-wide peak advocacy body representing ethnic and multicultural communities in Victoria. For over 30 years ECCV has remained the principal liaison point between ethnic communities, government and the wider community in Victoria. ECCV has been a key player in building Victoria as a successful, harmonious and multicultural community.

ECCV supports the Discussion Paper's aim of a Victorian drug treatment system that is client centred, accessible and promotes prevention and early intervention. We also support the building of partnerships and linkages to improve outcomes for clients.

ECCV supports a harm minimisation approach to alcohol and drug issues. The ECCV Drugs Taskforce Committee which works with a range of ethnic and mainstream organisations has been integral to the formation of this approach.

ECCV notes the DHS report *Drugs in a Multicultural Community: an assessment of improvement* published in September 2000 was not referred in the drafting of this Discussion Paper. Research findings stated in the report include:

- All CALD groups considered drug and alcohol consumption a problem in their communities
- Communities perceived drug services to be poorly coordinated and ineffective, particularly as directed to CALD communities
- Insufficient media coverage on ethnic newspapers and radio

ECCV believes that the issue of CALD communities and illicit drugs has not been addressed in this Discussion Paper. ECCV recommends developing

positive strategies to address CALD drug and alcohol issues as a policy priority.

Alcohol and Drug use is prevalent in many CALD communities but services are less responsive to them. ECCV believes that the lack of knowledge and denial, shame and zero tolerance approach are barriers in responding effectively to these issues. In addition, there must be consideration of the barriers encountered by new and emerging communities which affect their access to alcohol and other drug (AOD) services. These include language, literacy and physical and psychological problems.

ECCV's submission concentrates on facilitating opportunities for our CALD communities to participate in the planning and implementation of culturally competent strategies. The blueprint should develop strategies to respond to the diversity within Victorian communities. ECCV supports the Discussion Paper's proposal of providing greater service accessibility to young people from CALD and new and emerging communities.

## **2. Consulting ethno-specific agencies**

Most ethnic groups believe that drugs and alcohol consumption poses a problem for their communities. The DHS document *Drugs in a Multicultural Community: an assessment of involvement* stated that most ethnic communities consulted said they had little or no knowledge of the existence of specialist drug treatment services.

ECCV recommends that referral protocols between ethno-specific agencies and mainstream providers be strengthened. Bringing ethno-specific agencies into the planning framework provides a direct connection with CALD communities. ECCV recommends that ethno-specific agencies be funded to communicate directly with CALD drug and alcohol clients. Successful steps include identifying an ethno-specific agency that has good links with their community to ensuring stronger involvement and communications in drug and alcohol services for particular CALD communities.

ECCV also recommends that more CALD representatives be integrated into Government decision making processes and CALD representatives be placed on AOD mainstream service providers' boards and committees. This would ensure more effective interactions and consultation processes between mainstream providers and CALD communities.

As a peak body ECCV should also be considered for high level representation in key policy working groups. ECCV also recommends that a fully funded position for CALD alcohol and drugs advocacy sector work and educational work be considered. Such a position could be placed at ECCV or a like agency. This would increase the profile, knowledge and research around alcohol and drug issues and appropriate service resources.

### **3. Bilingual workers and cultural awareness training for workers**

Bilingual workers can be useful for communicating with clients with low English language proficiency. Bilingual staff has proven to be extremely effective in a number of organisations and their roles include case management with a focus on clients from the same ethnic background; secondary consultation to other staff; family education and support; and community education.

ECCV recommends that the Discussion Paper develop a cultural awareness training program for new and existing workers. Courses and training should involve case studies, group work, debates and visits to community groups. It should also involve a team approach with the involvement of community groups and drug awareness workers from CALD and new and emerging communities. Cross cultural training of drug workers would increase cultural sensitivity and knowledge of cultural issues and attitudes.

### **4. Recommended Strategies**

- 4.1 ECCV recommends that the Discussion Paper develop a CALD communication strategy as a future priority. The DHS document *Drugs in a Multicultural Community: an assessment of improvement* stated many communities mentioned that the government should be more creative and flexible with their approaches to illicit drugs and that they should be trying multiple solutions because of the complexity of the problem. An effective communication strategy would be working with ethnic radio stations, newspapers, Channel SBS and 31 to publicise the availability of drug and alcohol services and to advertise early prevention and other educational campaigns. Many patients and clients that come from CALD backgrounds may have difficulties expressing themselves in English. They still consider ethnic newspapers and media to be a more important source of information than mainstream media service providers.
- 4.2 The DHS document *Drugs in a Multicultural Community: an assessment of improvement* also stated that many CALD communities noted that pamphlets (even in another language) may be inadequate unless they were part of an education campaign involving personal interaction and explanation. ECCV recommends that the Discussion Paper develop specific focus groups to invite CALD clients and workers to share their views and experiences on drugs and alcohol. This would create a platform to discuss a topic that might be sensitive for some cultures. ECCV suggests that research should be undertaken to ensure that subjects for discussion and translations are culturally appropriate.
- 4.3 ECCV recommends that when establishing an AOD research strategy for Victoria, the Discussion Paper should also research CALD communities. Many communities find it difficult to obtain any statistics about the size or level of involvement in illicit drugs by their second and third generation youth population because they were included in the category 'born in Australia.' The document *Drugs in a Multicultural Community: an*

*assessment of improvement* stated that research based on the country of birth can be misleading if used as a measure of ethnicity. The document recommended that self-identified ethnicity is considered to be a more valid measure as it takes into consideration the shifting dynamics of ethnic identification.

ECCV believes having accurate statistical information would enable effective program and policy development and ensure that funding goes where it is needed.

- 4.4 ECCV recommends more adequate funding for drug and alcohol services. Funding is required for specific purpose programs to target specific problems in particular communities. Adequate provision of cross cultural counselling for individuals and families is extremely important. ECCV recommends that any funding includes targeted initiatives for CALD communities.

## **5. Conclusion**

In Conclusion, ECCV supports the Discussion Paper's goals to deliver better outcomes for individuals with alcohol and other drug problems. ECCV encourages the Discussion Paper to consult widely and properly with Victoria's CALD and new and emerging communities and include strategies to ensure they have equal access to drug and alcohol services.