



**ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria**

ECCV Position Paper
Palliative Care in Ethnic Communities
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Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is a broadly based, state-wide peak advocacy body representing ethnic and multicultural communities across Victoria since 1974. For over 35 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 society today. In particular, ECCV advocates for improved access and equity for aged care in ethnic communities.

Background

Victoria's older culturally diverse population is ageing more rapidly than the average population of seniors. By 2026 one in every four people aged over 80 will be from culturally and linguistically backgrounds.

ECCV supports the Victorian Government in adopting the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of palliative care: to improve the quality of life of patients and their families who face life-threatening illness, by providing pain and symptom relief, as well as spiritual and psychosocial support from diagnosis to the end of life and bereavement (WHO 2009).

People from culturally diverse and non-English speaking backgrounds have varying cultural perspectives, spiritual needs and traditions that impact on end of life and bereavement practices.

The concept of palliative care is not well understood by Victorians with culturally diverse backgrounds, many of whom are socially isolated, have limited English and significantly lower levels of health literacy.

ECCV Palliative Care Policy Principles

1. ECCV strongly supports the focus of the peak body Palliative Care Victoria (PCV) on ageing in ethnic communities and on developing culturally responsive care partnerships in response to the low uptake of palliative care by people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (PCV 2010).
2. ECCV calls for a commitment by the Victorian Government to provide palliative care health promotion programs specifically targeted at people with culturally diverse backgrounds. There is a lack of confidence and low palliative care service familiarity in the ethnic communities. In addition some culturally diverse people have experienced trauma, torture or coercion of medical practitioners in their countries of origin. ECCV recognises that seniors in ethnic communities need assistance to understand their options regarding palliative care and referral pathways.
3. ECCV supports partnerships between palliative care providers, and ethnic and multicultural organisations to maximise raising awareness in ethnic communities through trusted networks.
4. ECCV supports the need for responding sensitively to the cultural and spiritual preferences of ethnic seniors, their families and carers when they are faced with end of life and bereavement issues.

5. ECCV calls on the Victorian Government to provide adequate funding allocations for the translation of palliative care information into community languages including those of new and emerging communities. ECCV is concerned that there is a low familiarity with the services system and lack of information in preferred community languages.
6. ECCV calls on the Victorian Government to regulate requirements for culturally and spiritually responsive staff training, guides and resources for palliative care staff, in the areas of social, cultural and spiritual end of life preferences of ethnic communities.
7. ECCV strongly supports the further development of culturally responsive resources and toolkits, such as cultural and spiritual community profiles produced in collaboration with ethnic and multicultural organisations, to assist palliative care providers increase their knowledge and skills.
8. ECCV calls on the Victorian Government to provide additional resources to enable the ethnic community sector to effectively engage in partnerships with palliative care providers.
9. ECCV calls on the Victorian Government to provide additional resources for palliative care providers to respond to initial requirements of culturally diverse patients in accessing services, such as form filling and information requests that may seem complex or intrusive to seniors, families and carers with non-English speaking backgrounds.
10. ECCV advocates for increased and improved use of interpreters to support the needs of people with a life-threatening illness, their carers and families. ECCV is concerned that the use of interpreters is low within the palliative care service sector.
11. ECCV would like serious consideration given to regulatory requirements for advance briefing of interpreters regarding culturally and emotionally sensitive situations such as palliative care.
12. ECCV advocates for increased promotion, engagement and training of palliative care volunteers from ethnic communities to support culturally diverse people with terminal illnesses in aged care facilities, hospitals and the community.
13. ECCV would like to see increased culturally responsive palliative care promotion and programs in rural and regional Victoria where the social isolation and geographic dispersal of people with ethnic backgrounds is significantly greater.
14. ECCV would like to see the development and promotion of diversity policies regarding culturally and spiritually responsive palliative care and bereavement support for people in ethnic communities.
15. ECCV supports evidence-based research into spiritually and culturally diverse care responses to end of life support for people in ethnic communities.