



**ethnic
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council of
victoria**

March 2009

ECCV SUBMISSION TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE (PLSL) PROJECT

Community Sector Investment Fund (CSIF) Department Of Human Services

1. Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) welcomes the opportunity to present a submission to the Portable Long Service Leave (PLSL) Project for the Community Services Sector as part of the Community Sector Investment Fund (CSIF) and Stronger Community Organisations Project (SCOP) initiatives conducted by the Department of Human Services.
2. ECCV is the state-wide peak advocacy body representing ethno-specific agencies and multicultural organisations. 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 society.
3. ECCV membership consists of approximately 190 organisations that represent groups with an ethnic or multicultural focus, organisations with an interest in these areas, or individuals who support ECCV. The majority of those members are not-for-profit community service organisations. They provide services in areas such as aged care services, migration services, discrimination, community harmony, employment, education and training, health and community services, law and justice, and arts and culture.
4. ECCV commends the Victorian Government for establishing the PLSL and SCOP to support increased efficiency and sustainability for community service organisations (CSOs) and appreciates the opportunity to provide input on behalf of specific culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) welfare and community-based service organisations.

Portable Long Service Leave and Staff Retention

5. ECCV recognises that one of the foremost challenges facing the not-for-profit sector is staff retention. High staff turn-over is very expensive, can result in loss of operational knowledge, community contacts and established working relationships with key stakeholders, policy-makers and industry partners.
6. ECCV notes that aside from competitive higher salaries in the public and private sectors, one of the key reasons people give for choosing to leave the community sector, is the inability to transfer their long-service leave entitlements between organisations in the non-for-profit sector.

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7. ECCV believes that if the same measure of certainty and consistency that exists in the public sector existed in the community sector, staff turn-over among not-for-profits would be noticeably reduced.

Portable Long Service Leave and Staff Recruitment

8. ECCV recognises that another challenge facing not-for-profit organisations is attracting new staff into the sector. As with existing staff who choose to depart the not-for-profit sector, the inability to transfer their long-service leave entitlements between organisations is often identified by prospective employees as one disincentive to entering the community sphere. With the recruitment pool for the CALD community sector even smaller again, the impact of this disincentive upon the hiring capacity of migrant and multicultural organisations is even more pronounced.

The Ethnic Aged Care Sector

9. ECCV notes that one area of social service experiencing particular difficulty in attracting qualified new staff is the ethnic aged care sector.
10. According to population projections, by 2011 38% of the aged community in the Melbourne metropolitan area will be from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and 2% in regional Victoria. As a result there is an urgent need for cultural specific aged care services and bilingual workers in the community services sector.
11. ECCV notes that several ethno-specific welfare organisations have initiated alliances with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to encourage training and recruitment of bilingual community service staff.

New and Emerging Communities

12. ECCV also notes that social services for new and emerging communities such as refugees and humanitarian entrants is another area experiencing difficulty in attracting qualified new staff, especially guidance counselors, interpreters and translators.
13. With a very limited recruitment pool for the suitably qualified and culturally competent staff, ECCV believes every possible incentive is required to attract new personnel and address an alarming unmet need.

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Implementation Issues for Portable Long Service Leave

14. While ECCV believes projects such as the PLSL will further encourage the retention of bilingual staff in the community services sector, and which will provide an attractive career pathway for those workers, the Council is mindful that implementation of a consistent PLSL Agreement will not be a straight-forward task for all not-for-profits in the migrant and multicultural sector.
15. Firstly, the ongoing existence of many community and not-for-profit organisations depends greatly, if not entirely, on the provision of public financing through grants and funding agreements. All Government departments must therefore remain cognisant of the impact that inconsistent funding allocations to community organisations will have upon their ability to fund the proposed 1.4% of payroll to fulfil their obligations to a proposed PLSL Agreement. ECCV therefore recommends that appropriate safeguards be built into the PLSL Agreement to ensure that long service obligations are able to be met by a requisite increase in government funding.
16. Secondly, many ethnic community organisations are small organisations with few staff, limited resources, and often limited expertise in the area of workplace relations legislation and staff entitlements. With this in mind, ECCV also recommends that as far as is practicable, the implementation of a PLSL Agreement across the community and the not-for-profit sector should be as simple as possible to alleviate the operational burden on organisations already surviving with scarce resources.
17. ECCV believes it is essential that every effort be made by the Victorian Government to ensure that all community organisations fully understand their obligations under a PLSL Agreement, and if need be, are assisted in resourcing their organisations to fulfil their accounting responsibilities.
18. ECCV also recommends that appropriate training and educational resources are available for community organisations serving non-English speaking clientele as early as possible to ensure every organisation's obligations under a PLSL Agreement are understood and dutifully met.

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19. Community and not-for-profit organisations form the backbone of social services for CALD communities in Victoria, supporting thousands of Victorians from non-English speaking backgrounds every year. ECCV believes the implementation of a simple and sustainable PLSL Agreement throughout the community sector will do much to help attract and retain the best quality staff to ensure this quality of service continues.
20. Nevertheless, for a PLSL Agreement to be implemented effectively, migrant and multicultural community organisations will require the same kind of support from Government that their own clients have come to depend upon.

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