

30 July 2010

Caring for Older Australians  
Productivity Commission  
P.O. Box 1428  
Canberra City ACT 2601

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to make a submission to the "Caring for Older Australians" inquiry on behalf of the Aged Care Team from the Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) (MIC), Victoria.

The MIC Aged Care Team has two key equity and access projects that target the Eastern Region of Melbourne, Victoria. These projects aim to assist older people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to find out about and access aged care services. One project is funded through the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program and the other through the Department of Health and Ageing Community Partners Program (CPP). Both projects also work with service providers to improve their cultural responsiveness. It is our experience that older CALD people have low knowledge and understanding about the aged care services available to them, find it difficult to access those services, and are reluctant to use services due to language and cultural barriers.

In this letter I would like to briefly comment on two issues for the Productivity Commission to consider:

1. The type of aged care services preferred by older CALD people;
2. The need for flexible and readily available transport;
3. The effect of a fragmented service system on these service preferences.

**Firstly**, the Productivity Commission issues paper outlines aged care services. There was one key omission which is critical to the type of support that older CALD seniors prefer. It is our experience, and also indicated in the HACC service usage data, that CALD seniors utilise social support and planned activity groups offered through the HACC program at a higher level than their Australian counterparts. In particular there is a preference for ethno-specific or multicultural services of this type. The issues paper does not mention these important services. It is our view that aged care should continue to provide these types of services and even expand on them in the future.

**Secondly**, these types of services require clients to be transported from home to the service location. Improvements need to be made to the transport services available for clients for these and other services. Transport services should be more available and more flexible to travel across boundaries. With smaller CALD communities it is often necessary to travel further distance to a preferred ethno-specific group which is not available in the local area. Better transport for all older people would encourage increased social connectedness through accessing formal services as well as informal activities and groups such as senior citizens clubs.

**Thirdly**, the aged care service system in Australia is complex and fragmented. The social support and planned activity group services outlined above are available through the HACC program. In Victoria, as an individual's needs increase and they require packaged care beyond HACC, they are then not eligible to utilise HACC services. The system creates artificial boundaries between types

of services to the detriment of the care required by the individual. Anecdotally, we have heard of some cases where packaged care has been refused so that an individual can continue to attend a planned activity group or receive support from a specific care worker.

In making this submission I ask the Productivity Commission to:

1. Recognise the type of aged care support preferred by CALD communities and consider how this support can continue to be available and expanded on in the future;
2. Recommend that the amount of transport available for older people is increased and is provided flexibly to meet the needs of aged care recipients;
3. Address the fragmentation of the aged care service system so that seamless service provision that meets the needs of the client is of highest priority;
4. Recommend a continuation of equity and access programs that aim to increase awareness about, understanding of and access to aged care services for older CALD people;
5. Establish key targets and quality measures that address the cultural competence of service providers and recognise the diversity of our ageing population.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. I look forward to hearing the outcomes.

Yours Sincerely,

**Sharon Porteous**  
**Equity and Access Project Officer**  
Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)