

Caring for Older Australians
Productivity Commission Inquiry
GPO Box 1428
CANBERRA ACT 2601.

Dear Sir / Madam

Productivity Commission Inquiry: Caring for Older Australians

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission to this inquiry. The Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Incorporated (CMCF) welcomes the opportunity to submit comments to the *Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Caring for Older Australians*

Australia faces significant challenges in caring for the increasing demands for appropriate aged care services, the high expectations concerning choices and responsiveness of services, and in particular, the ability to address the access and equity issues in the provision of culturally and linguistically responsive services for the ageing population of the CALD communities.

Through our regular community leaders' consultations with the CALD communities in the ACT, it is acknowledged that the ageing population in the ACT continues to grow and a high percentage of the population over 70 years old will consist of elderly of CALD backgrounds.

There are now increasing demands for appropriate and responsive aged care support services due to the fact that:

1. The family dynamics and work life demands has created a gap in the perceived close knot support that families / carers were able to provide for their frailing and ageing parents living together at home. As such, many elderly parents are experiencing isolation and loneliness, with a lack of companionship and the basic support and care most needed during the day time hours.
2. The lack of appropriate transport often prevent older people from participating in community activities and quite often, medical / health appointments have been missed, and follow up care become fragmented, and their health and well being compromised.
3. The language barriers poses extreme difficulty in the ability of elderly to maintain basic communication with community services providers, and in accessing appropriate care to meet their required needs. Most of the CALD communities relied heavily on the social support network and community volunteers to lend the much needed support for the care of the elderly in their own home.
4. Family tension and stress associated with the care of the elderly often forced the elderly parents to seek separate / independent accommodation, resulted in separation and the loss of regular basic home care support. The increase incidence of elderly abuse and elderly depression place further demand for services for elderly groups facing homelessness and psycho-geriatric conditions.
5. It is well documented that the CALD communities are reluctant / resistant to access residential care / respite care / aged care services due to language barriers and cultural beliefs that to enter residential care is foreseen as a "dead" end of their life, grief for lost of a homely life and rejection by family.

In response to the issue papers and in accordance with the Terms of References of the Productivity Commission, CMCF would like to submit the following comments reflecting to:

- Strength and weakness of aged care services
- Effectiveness of the aged care system
- Conception of aged care and disability and mental health policy
- Choices for older people requiring residential care services
- Charter for the rights of aged care consumers
- Workforce to care for the elderly

The provision of aged care services must consider the following cultural diversity and the heightened needs of the CALD communities:

1. Accessing to culturally appropriate services is difficult as the services are unable to address communication problems due to language barriers and the unavailability of appropriate and quality interpreter services.
2. Services providers are reluctant to use appropriate interpreter services such as the GP telephone interpreting line and / or make arrangement for face to face interpreter services due to cost / unavailability of interpreters and the reluctance to arrange for the services as this was often viewed as a burden and time consuming task.
3. Privacy / confidentiality restriction and bureaucracy excluded the community support person to assist the elderly client in making enquiry on client's behalf, resulting in delaying access to much needed services.
4. The Lack of interaction and connection with CALD community organisations to design culturally appropriate services resulted in the lack of understanding of the special needs of the community.
5. The inability of services providers to provide culturally competent workers resulted with client accessing the services were not provided with equitable services. This led to further confusion and refusal of services being offered to the clients.
6. Elderly people from CALD backgrounds who may wish to remain in their family home often have difficulty to access HACC services as quite often, due to funding constraints, the service providers are not able to provide the adequate hours of services required.
7. The increasing number of elderly living with dementia and the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases means that the provision of care in the residential care facilities must allocate adequate resources to develop and provide interactive residential care activities programs and services to meet the unique needs of elderly from CALD backgrounds, as many would revert to their first culture and language as they grow older.
8. The current ACAT assessment system needs to be reviewed to ensure that adequate interpreter services be made available to assist with the assessment. There should be a regular monitoring and evaluation system in place to ensure that the elderly person has received the appropriate and co-ordinated care services required.
9. Due to language barriers, elderly from CALD backgrounds understand very little about their rights and obligations and the provision of choices and fees for accessing aged care services and / or residential care facilities. The Community Partners Programs targeting the CALD communities needs to be reviewed and expand to encourage community taking the lead to deliver information and referral services to increase their community

awareness and understanding of the aged care program, in the language that is understood by the community.

10. Due to the shortages of community workers for aged care services, the delivery of training courses in language other than English may be an option to encourage community workers of CALD backgrounds to seek employment and provide culturally appropriate services to their own community.
11. Moving into residential care services often means separation of the client from their loved ones. The reform of aged care services needs to develop a more flexibility range of residential care type accommodation to enable the couple be assessed and enter the care together. The inclusion of the couple focussed care may offer some psycho-social support and bring some "normality" to a previously homely life.

CMCF would also like to offer the following suggestions to the inquiry for consideration:

In the provision of culturally sensitive and appropriate aged care services for older people of CALD backgrounds, the Government at federal and state level:

1. Set up funding processes to encourage community partnership with service providers to develop community based support service lead by community, targeting the community special needs.
2. Gathering of support base to ensure that there is an inclusion of a culturally diverse spokesperson or representation in policy making level to advise on the special needs of CALD communities and promote age-friendly community attitudes.
3. Expand the HACCC program to enable the provision of community lead day care centres to cater for the specific cultural needs. The day care centre can be co-located with the residential care facilities to encourage better interaction between the residences and elderly community.
4. Ensure the government agencies work with community organisations to establish community support programs to develop community education strategies to disseminate aged care information for older people and their families on the availability and quality of aged care services and how to access these services.

Conclusion

CMCF's role is to represent the needs and aspirations of Canberra's multicultural community, while celebrating its achievements and fostering a spirit of cooperation and harmony. In this role, the CMCF has a key responsibility to support ethnic communities in the ACT.

Elderly people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds require culturally appropriate services and support. The range of services such as dementia-specific services, community services, respite services, transition to aged care services and home and community care packages must address the access and equity issues and that the accessibility, availability, appropriateness and affordability of the services be monitored and evaluated.

Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc
30 July 2010