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SUBMISSION
To
Caring for Older Australians -
Productivity Commission Issues Paper May 2010

The Polish Welfare Office is the base for the welfare services auspiced by the Polish Association in Hobart Inc. The Association receives the majority of its funding through the Home and Community Care (HACC) program to deliver services to the frail aged, younger disabled members of the community and their carers, with a particular focus on members of the Polish Community in Tasmania. The Association has been involved in the delivery of HACC services since the commencement of the program in 1985.

Discussions have taken place with members of the Welfare Advisory Committee, who oversee the operations of the Polish Welfare Office, as well as with community members on their expectations of future care for older Australians, with a particular focus on meeting the needs of those from CALD backgrounds. Parts of these discussions were written up in a consultation funded through the Department of Health and Ageing - Community Partners Program (2009-2010).

Issues raised are outlined below:

- Older persons from CALD backgrounds need additional support to access mainstream services. Ethno-specific agencies have a vital role to play in linking members of ethnic communities with mainstream services providers. Ethno - specific agencies need to be funded adequately now and into the future to fulfil this role.
- Aged care service providers need to be encouraged to employ staff who are fluent in languages other than English (LOTE). Similarly, bilingual staff should be suitably remunerated if their LOTE is utilized in their workplace.
- Members of CALD communities need to be encouraged to enter the aged care workforce through the provision of traineeships and mentoring programs.

- Older people are encouraged to live at home as long as possible. There should be more services involved in home visits, providing older people with practical help around the house. During consultations within the community, older Polish people have requested that additional funding be made available for regular lawn mowing, gardening and spring cleaning services, as many of them struggle to deal with larger tasks of daily living. Such areas of need are not considered high priority within the HACC program, but are regularly requested by older people in order to maintain a sense of wellbeing and safety.
- There should be more information available about respite options (e.g. short to long term; in home or out of home; emergency) accessible to assist family carers to receive relief in difficult and stressful care situations.
- The funding available to residential care facilities should be increased where it is identified that a resident has additional CALD needs (e.g. linguistic, cultural, religious and culinary), similar to the additional funding provided to deliver services to those residents with dementia.
- The majority of first generation older people from ethnic backgrounds revert to their native language as they age, thus making it difficult to communicate. It would be very helpful for provisions to be made so that staff in residential care facilities could communicate with residents in their own language utilising new applied technology.
- A funding pool to be made available to residential care facilities to purchase on site interpreter services when required to assist with comprehensive assessment of new residents from a CALD background who have limited English language skills. Similarly, access to the free TIS telephone interpreter service should be available to residential care facilities, similar to the free access available to general practitioners and pharmacies.
- Increased funding is needed for supporting activities coordinators (also known as lifestyle and leisure coordinators) to assist in the preparation of activities in residential care facilities for CALD residents who wish to take part in activities that are responsive to their cultural needs, such as celebrating days of cultural significance, different festive traditions.
- A wider range of catering options could be implemented providing older people with more food choices in residential care facilities, such as food from other cultural backgrounds.
- The feeling of isolation is most feared by older Polish people when moving into permanent residential care facilities. Social inclusion and being part of their community is important, even when living in residential care facilities. Support programs which reduce social isolation for those in the

community (such as the HACC funded Polish Outreach Program in Hobart and the Polish Older Persons Outreach Program in Melbourne), should be permitted to continue to deliver services (in a limited capacity) to those older Polish persons moving from community to permanent residential care facilities, in order to maintain that sense of community belonging and inclusion.

Teresa Grabek
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