

Third Submission to the Productivity Commission  
**Caring for Older Australians**

**Fronitha Care**

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## **What is the practical policy for an appropriate CALD response?**

The single most important variable which gives to a practical policy response to CALD elders is demographics and more specifically the volume of demand within any catchment area by a particular CALD Community.

A large number of elders in a particular CALD Community provides for economies of scale which permit development of two appropriate service models, i.e. ethno-specific or cluster. The exception to this is where the numbers of CALD elders from the one ethnic group are too small and alternative models need to be sought. For the purposes of this submission, this model has been named CALD Community Model.

### **The Ethno-specific Model**

The ethno-specific service model concentrates effort on a particular CALD Community, thus taking advantage of economies of scale through,

- a) minimizing the range of languages in which key documents (e.g. service agreements, etc) need to be translated;
- b) allowing bilingual bicultural staff who have an affinity with the particular CALD Community to be recruited;
- c) providing a response which automatically acknowledges the elderly person's language and cultural identity, thus providing an environment within which the elderly person can engage and be engaged;
- d) implementation of an activity program and menu which is consistent with the elderly person's cultural identity;
- e) A high profile within the CALD Community thus providing an easy point of entry to the service system.

Although there are economies of scale in an ethno-specific service, there are nevertheless additional costs being incurred by the service provider. These additional costs include,

- a) Food; particularly imported ingredients.
- b) Time & Effort which needs to be invested in developing a strong relationship with a particular CALD Community.
- c) Cost of Minor Capital Works (e.g. satellite discs, church, appropriate décor).
- d) Costs of translating key documents, e.g. service agreements.

It should also be noted that an ethno-specific service response does not need to be undertaken by an ethno-specific agency. Mainstream organizations that are willing to invest in developing strong relationships with a particular CALD Community are also well placed to develop an ethno-specific service.

It is acknowledged that the ethno-specific response may not be possible where there is a large number of CALD Communities in a catchment area and a single community is not large enough to warrant this model of service delivery.

In these circumstances a cluster or grouping model presents as an alternative to ensure cultural sensitivity to elders. The development of a cluster model must begin with an analysis of the demographics of the service provider's catchment area. Through this analysis the service provider is

able to identify CALD Communities with large enough numbers to warrant adoption of this service model.

## **CALD Cluster Model**

The advantages of the cluster model in terms of cultural sensitivity parallel those of an ethno-specific model. That is the cluster model can provide the social and linguistic environment which engages the elderly person and allows the elderly person to engage with their social and care environment.

The costs associated with a cluster model however are higher because the service provider has to provide for a wider range of needs in,

- a) food;
- b) translated material;
- c) investment of time and effort to establishing and maintaining strong working relationships with CALD Communities;
- d) Costs for minor capital works.

At the same time, the cluster model requires a coordinating mechanism or forum to ensure that service providers can act collaboratively in identifying the CALD Communities with whom each service provider will invest time and resources to establish strong working relationships. In the absence of a forum which allows service providers to define and agree on the CALD Communities, upon which they will focus, can lead to unnecessary duplication of effort and ultimately inefficiencies which will add to costs but not benefit the CALD elders themselves. It also runs the risk of increased competition which ultimately reduces the number of CALD elders in cluster and lead to undermining the viability of the model. In other words if a large number of service providers offer clusters to the same CALD communities within the catchment area it will mean that each service provider will have smaller numbers of CALD elders to the point where the grouping is not large enough to achieve maximum outcomes.

## **CALD Community Model**

Finally there is a third set of demographics where the cluster model and ethno-specific model is not viable; i.e. where the number of elders from a specific CALD Community are too small to allow these service models to operate effectively. For example, there are a large number of regional areas where CALD Communities are much underrepresented and service providers have to care for one elderly person from a particular cultural group. These circumstances however do not negate the importance of ensuring that the elderly CALD person experiences a social environment which addresses their need for connection.

The appropriate service model in these circumstances is for the service provider to invest significantly in engaging the CALD Community to play an active part in service delivery; i.e. to optimize the opportunities for the lone CALD elder to experience social connection, opportunities to celebrate significant cultural events, appropriate food, etc by engaging the local CALD Communities' involvement in the service. This could be achieved through a range of strategies including,

- a) Actively seeking volunteers from CALD Communities to provide companionship to the CALD elder.
- b) Inviting the CALD Communities to the facility to celebrate significant cultural events.
- c) Use of volunteers to assist the facility Cook in preparing appropriate meals.

In addition, the Provider will need to pay particular attention to,

- a) Use of interpreters when required.
- b) Use of cue cards and common phrases in the elderly person's language.

To implement these practices the service provider will need to be compensated to the additional costs associate with:

- a) Time in developing a volunteer program targeting CALD Communities.
- b) Staff training in culturally sensitive service delivery.
- c) Use of interpreters.
- d) Costs associated with cue cards and other resources to assist in day to day communication.

CALD responsive services also require that service staff are familiar with and have ready access to information on the culture of CALD residents. The most cost effective response to this need is for the Department of Health & Ageing to provide funding to PICAC or other agencies to develop websites which provide this detail. The model of such websites already exists on [www.greekcare.org](http://www.greekcare.org)