

**Speech by Ms Lesley Podesta
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'A Government Perspective'
Summit on the Provision of Culturally Sensitive Aged Care
Australian Multicultural Foundation
Melbourne
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

The Hon Sir James Gobbo AC CVO	Chairperson, AMF
Mr Hass Delall	Executive Director, AMF
Mr Greg Mundy	CEO ACSA
Mr Richard Gray	Catholic Health Services Australia
Ms Helen Kurincic	CEO Anglicare

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you on **'A Government Perspective - Culturally Appropriate Aged Care – What are we trying to achieve?'**

Introduction

The Government through its funded programs has responsibility to ensure that the Department provides support for the healthy ageing of older Australians and quality and cost effective care for frail older people and support for their carers.

Ms Bryant in her presentation spoke on the importance of the **Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society** as a tool to ensure policies, programs and services are developed to incorporate culturally appropriate aged care issues.

As we all would be aware, there are particular groups of older Australians who are more likely to be disadvantaged in accessing aged care services compared to older Australians in general.

These groups are defined by the *Aged Care Act, 1997* as ‘**Special Needs**’ groups, which include those who live in rural or remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people who are financially and socially disadvantaged.

In response, the Department has developed and implemented the **Cultural Diversity Framework for Ageing Australians**.

A major outcome in the implementation of the Framework is for all aged care providers, irrespective whether they provide community or residential care respond to the seven Charter principles of access, equity, communication, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.

These principles are demonstrated by the Department actively seeking broader consultation with the community and the aged care sector through the **Aged Care Planning Advisory Committees**, the independent **Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency** and the **Aged Care Services Australia**.

Specifically, the Department oversees a number of initiatives, which are designed to address access and equity to aged care for members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, they include:

- The Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care (PICAC)- projects in each State and Territory to work with both communities and providers and the Department to ensure that the needs of older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are identified and addressed.

- Ethnic Aged Service Grants (EASGs) to eight (8) community based organisations in New South Wales and Victoria to focus on the needs of the frail aged from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Ethnic Population Projections research on the changing ethnic composition of the Australia's older people to assist in future planning by Government and by the aged care sector.
- Dementia Care for People from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds.

At the community level, the **Aged Care Assessment Teams** are advised of the need for ACATs to identify, facilitate and promote culturally sensitive forms of assessment for culturally and linguistically diverse people.

This process ensures a more accurate exchange of aged care information. Independent, qualified interpreters are used to assist people whose main language spoken at home (*or most recent private residential setting*) is not English.

In some regions it may be appropriate to produce information in other languages for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The Department's ACAT Guidelines outline how ACATs in areas with culturally diverse populations should consider engaging liaison workers from relevant backgrounds. ACATs should be aware of culturally appropriate residential and community care services for frail older people in their region, including the establishment of links with culturally diverse organisations, services and welfare officers, locally.

ACATs may also utilise the services of special workers for older people from culturally diverse backgrounds, contact a local migrant resource centre or refer to the Ethnic Community Council directory for information on specific support groups.

Each year the **Aged Care Approvals Round** specifically target a proportion of new places to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Almost 1,800 places were allocated nationally for services for culturally and linguistically diverse older people between 1996 and 1999.

In the 2001 Aged Care Approvals Round, 515 places were allocated nationally for services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

However, before places are allocated **the Aged Care Planning Advisory Committee** responsible for advising the Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing on the number and type of places for distribution.

The Committee is required to provide the Secretary with advice which:

- Identifies community needs.
- Rank the identified needs in priority order.
- Consider the types of care that should be provided in a particular region.
- Consider the most appropriate proportion of places for special needs groups such as people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In relation to the Home and Community Care Program, more broadly, special needs groups are frail aged and younger people with a disability, and their carers, who also have additional needs associated with factors such as cultural background, socio-economic circumstances, or location.

Enhancing access for these special needs groups has involved a number of strategies to provide services tailored specifically to their needs, and facilitating access to “mainstream” programs, for example, through provision of information in community languages and training of staff.

Decisions about targeting services and levels of resource use for these clients involve many of the same considerations as for individuals in the general target population, but also require recognition that special needs may affect the nature and level of service inputs required to realise outcomes similar to those set for other clients.

In addition, the Government awarded grants to a range of different communities and organisations to help build linkages between culturally and linguistically diverse communities and aged care providers.

Currently, there are 160 ethno-specific aged care homes covering 34 major culturally and linguistically diverse communities and 118 clusters of clients from 29 communities with mainstream aged care homes.

The collection of relevant data is also important in determining the new and emerging aged care issues for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, in June 2001 the Government sponsored the publication by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Projections of Older Immigrants – people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, 1996 – 2026*.

These projections will assist the Department, the aged care industry and the community sector to evaluate and prioritise current and future initiatives in culturally and linguistically diverse aged care.

What does a good service require to ensure cultural appropriateness in aged care service delivery? This is best summed up as follows:

Community perspective:

- Strong and effective consulting mechanisms across culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- Comprehensive ACAT cultural assessment.
- Access to appropriate advocacy services.
- Linkages with State and Territory representatives of the PICAC Initiative.
- Awareness of aged care programs available.

Service Providers perspective:

- Identification and understanding of the culturally and linguistically diverse needs of older people.
- Recruitment of appropriate bi-lingual staff.
- Cross cultural staff training for all employers of aged care services.
- Catering provisions, considerate of cultural needs.
- Culturally relevant recreational activities.
- Access to religious/spiritual services.
- Contact with members of the same language group.
- Sensitivity to cultural/religious/personal social issues.

Government:

- Adoption of the Charter in the development and implementation of programs/services which include and promote culturally and linguistically diverse aged care needs of older Australians.
- There needs to be a clearer focus that incorporates the whole spectrum of aged care services, which are available to our aging population from Carelink, CACPs, Grants, and access to Residential Aged Care.

Current achievements:

- To date, through the above mentioned initiatives achievements under the Ethnic Aged Care Framework indicate progress in various areas of the aged care, such as:
- Improved access to aged care services through improved information and development of new places in ethno-specific and multicultural facilities.
- Provision of information on choice and access to aged care to ethnic communities.
- Established strategic partnerships between mainstream aged care facilities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, resulting mainly from PICAC projects' activities.
- Development of awareness of dementia within culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including the development of dementia resources for carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Development of ethnic population projections to enable better plan services for culturally and linguistically diverse.
- Development of resources and training for service providers on culturally appropriate.

Where to from here, well there is a number of emerging issues or rather constant themes for us to consider.

- Quality of life.
- Ageing in Place.
- Public policy choices vs private choices (inter-generational conflict, cultural traditions, family responsibility).
- Balance of services: home-based or residential care – an issue of cooperation between community care and residential care in educating communities on available services and training service providers in best practice.

- Diversity in service delivery.

Conclusion

While much has been done there is so much more to do, many challenges exist in aged care, including making sure we are addressing the needs people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Meeting these challenges must be undertaken at all levels. To this end, the Department looks forward to working with the aged care sector to ensure that every effort is undertaken to meet these challenges and ensure that we meet the aged care needs of **ALL** members of our ageing communities.

Thank you.