

ETHNIC DISABILITY ADVOCACY CENTRE:

(July 2008)

INPUT FOR CONSIDERATION:

LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND NUMERACY PROGRAM SERVICES

Re: Response by Office of Multicultural Interests

EDAC is the peak disability advocacy service in WA for people from culturally and linguistically diverse background (CaLD) who have a disability and their families/carers and communities.

Background information on CaLD people with disabilities in general.

In all service usage, there is an under-representation of those people with a disability who are from a CALD background. The CSDA interim report (1996) cited the ABS survey of 1993 which showed that of the 18% of the population had a disability of some kind, 15.4% were people with disabilities from a CaLD background (NESB) yet only 4.3% were using disability services.

A number of factors have been suggested as contributing to the under-utilisation of available disability services and general community access and inclusion of CALD people (e.g. ADEC 1992, Burdekin 1994). They were and still largely continue to be:

- a reluctance to use disability services and to access community activities due to language and cultural differences and understanding and attitudes
- need for improved disability awareness, access and inclusion provisions by organisations and service providers
- experience of pre-migration and trauma
- barriers to accessing services, such as information not available in community languages
- lack of culturally appropriate service practices and staffing
- inadequate use (and misuse) of interpreters by service agencies
- lack of satisfactory consultation and inclusion of CaLD people with disabilities, families/carers and their communities at all levels
- lack of appropriately trained staff to work with people with disabilities from CaLD backgrounds.

People of CaLD background who are refugees as well as disabled will have added problems to contend with in order to gain English language, literacy and numeracy skills.

CaLD people and refugees cannot be put in the same category. Some will come into Australia with no literacy skills in any language and very little or no educational background whereas others will have the highest University training in their own language and simply need skills in English language and literacy competency. The training needs will therefore be different for each.

It is important to realize that many CaLD people, including those who were Refugees, work even with little or no English and no literacy skills at all, due to the fact that Centrelink benefits do not cover the cost of rent, travel and other necessities. Many CaLD people will work on casual or part-time basis in very low paid, unskilled jobs – that are not sustainable in the long term for a variety of reasons – this, under the auspices of Job Network and comply with Centrelink requirements. The problems associated with this are that these people will never develop the vocational skills that are needed in Australia; they will always be unskilled and on the edge of employability. This group of people will include most often women, but young, single adults (especially those who come without families). CaLD people with a disability, mental or physical, and especially those who acquired these through torture and trauma are especially disadvantaged.

Some suggestions:

Personal cost of training to the CaLD person is quite great, both in terms of loss of other earnings no matter how meager. People have to feel that it is going to be worthwhile for them, therefore they need more support from both Centrelink and their Job Network. Training costs include travel and child care, many people simply cannot afford to pay more money in these areas.

Since many Employers will benefit from CaLD people with better skills they should be encouraged to become partners with the training providers, this could be that English and Literacy skills are delivered in workplaces (this would mean that people would not have to worry about extra travel) or near the workplaces so that people could get to the training. Employers could also subsidize people's training either by giving them time off or in some other way. Just finding a job will not increase national productivity, developing a skilled workforce will do so. CaLD people are a large untapped potentially skilled workforce but for them to remain in training they need some supports in place.

A suitable course needs to be made available for people who are highly skilled but in their language and simply need English language and English literacy skills so that these people can use their skills in Australia. Similarly there is a need to accommodate people with disabilities by providing accessible training that will allow them to access skilled employment. People with disabilities can also add to the productivity of the nation given an opportunity.

EDAC supports the *List of Recommendations* made by OMI with the proviso that CaLD people with disabilities are included and that accessibility is a priority. Access both in terms of the building where the training is conducted and the that the delivery takes into consideration the special needs of the participants, but that even before that people are given the information necessary about what training is available for them. This information needs to be in community languages, since many CaLD people are not aware of what is available.

- **How could LLNP learn from other programs?**

Not for all but for many CaLD people the model used by the First Click program (conducted by the WA Department of Education and Training) could be considered, this program utilizes local agencies to deliver the training, also CaLD specific agencies are involved as well as CaLD disability agency in delivering training. These agencies could be funded to deliver LLNP as well.

- **What kind of flexibilities should be incorporated into Program delivery and why?**

People should have the flexibility to remain at whatever level until they are ready to go to the next level, or they can fast track if they are learning quickly.

People should be able to access at any time, not just in connection with AMEP , should be available to all CaLD no matter how long in Australia.

“Employability Skills and Workplace Culture in Australia” can also be delivered in conjunction with community based delivery of LLNP training.

- **What structure for Program delivery would best meet client’s needs and ensure successful outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged clients (e.g. Indigenous Australians) and clients with multiple barriers to learning?**

Training needs to be delivered flexibly and at a local level, so that participants have the least amount of travel and are within their community setting, this enables them to develop enough confidence and ability to then access other programs. Support programs such as counseling still to be available, if not on site but at least in a community setting.

- **How can the linkages between LLNP providers and referring agencies (Centrelink and Employment Services Providers, including Job Network Members (JNMs) be improved (noting that there has been a review of Employment Services Arrangements, as part of an open tender process occurring later this year)?**

Centrelink and Employment Services Providers need to be more aware of the training needs of their clients. Clients who want to train further should be encouraged and those who want to work need to be counseled about the advantages of training, those who still

want to work should still be encouraged to attend some kind of training, this is where collaboration with employers would be beneficial. Employment services need to develop further skills in communicating with their CaLD clients or refer them if no satisfactory resolution.

- **Is the LLNP the most cost-effective way of skilling people with low language, literacy and numeracy skills? How could it be made more effective?**

LLNP needs to be delivered at community level for people with multiple barriers. People who have very good educational backgrounds should be accommodated in TAFE. If people are attending AMEP classes then they should have training in LLNP at the same time. At the community level the two need to be taught at the same time. People who just need LLNP need to be accommodated separately.

- **How could the current measurement of educational outcomes and client achievement be improved?**

Clients should be made aware of the level that they need depending on what they want to achieve in the future. For further vocational attainments clients need to be aware of the level that they have to achieve and the kinds of testing that will be in place to determine if and when the client has achieved this level. Testing needs to occur but so that the client is aware of their achievement rather than a pass/fail situation.

- **Do the current payment structures to LLNP service providers drive improved outcomes? If not what improvements could be made to gain improvements?**

EDAC supports OMI's recommendation with the addition that supports be put in place for people with disabilities generally and then case by case situation as required.

- **Should providers be financially rewarded if their clients gain employment? If so how would it be measured?**

Gaining employment is not a good enough measure, people can gain employment and still not be able to speak English or read and write, and at this level the person is not going to be able to add to productivity. Providers should be financially rewarded if the person has developed language skills and can read and write, the level should be determined ahead of time; the person has applied for other training such as vocational training. Women need to learn English and need to read and write so that they can help their children. People with disabilities need language skills so that they can advocate on their own behalf. LLNP is not just for employment but as part of life skills, social capital adds to productivity even if measurement of this is hard.