

Address

to

The House of Representatives Standing Committee

on

Family, Community, Housing and Youth (FCHY)

Inquiry into Better Support for Carers

SUPPORT NEEDS OF CARERS
FOR
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY
WHO ARE FROM
CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS (CALD)

Summary:

- **Significant points from the submission**
- **Some practical actions required**

July 2008

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Significant points from the submission:

- Recognition of the Carer role - EDAC recognises the dedication, determination and resilience of many carers in Australian society, protecting and supporting the needs of the people with disabilities and those with special needs.
- Carers should have the choice of just the caring role and/or employment and be appropriately remunerated for both, whether through Centrelink payments or wages. Carers should be supported whatever their choices might be.
- Effective and adequate care support for the person with disabilities can free the carer to engage in various types of employment, training and social activity.
- Carers from a CaLD backgrounds often encounter enormous barriers in accessing services and support for themselves and their family members due to cultural attitudes towards disability and language problems. They feel Australian society isn't acknowledging their needs when caring for an individual with a disability, and are also finding too that their value as a carer isn't appropriately acknowledged or respected in their ethnic communities - a double alienation from their family members and causing enormous isolation and stress - carers feeling devalued and excluded by both mainstream society and their own ethnic community. The ethnic cultural/religious perceptions of the caring role can be disempowering, with imposed guilt, shame and poor self esteem.
- Additional problems for refugees. Refugees experience greater disadvantage due to even additional burdens – such as the mental health effects of torture and trauma that add to the more considerable settlement issues and extensiveness of support needed. This is usually compounded by language differences and difficulty in accessing support information and services.
- With the demanding role of caring and added anxiety of settling in a new country there is insufficient time and energy to pursue possibilities of employment. Very often these new migrants and refugees are preoccupied in learning English.
- Newly arriving groups and those from specific religious backgrounds in particular, tend to find that they have no comfortable access to mainstream services. They are 'special needs' groups that warrant specially targeted support at least during their settlement years. Some will continue to need ethnic-specific carer support.

Some practical actions required:

1. When developing an improved legislative and policy framework for carers, ensure the needs of CaLD carers are explicitly included.
2. When promoting and implementing carer legislation, policies through practical strategies, include the ethnic communities and CaLD carers, so that at the very least, they feel informed and protected when they endeavour to access social support systems.
3. Promote and support CaLD Carer leadership training and their involvement, such as:
 - Self advocacy training for CaLD carers to increase their knowledge in navigating the disability/carer service system and gain confidence in themselves as carers.
 - Increase CaLD carer representation on government committees and consultations.
 - Financially supporting CaLD carers and their communities to undertake initiatives such as setting up their culture-specific respite centres i.e. provide government support for community leadership initiative projects that enable small and large CaLD communities to obtain set-up and sustainable funding to support their carers.
4. Recognise, promote and support the valued status of CaLD family carers.
 - Improve financial assistance for low income groups towards the costs of caring, and its accessibility, recognising that the CaLD population is at particular risk and will need special assistance and support.
 - Facilitate easier access for carers to benefits such as the carers allowance, tax exemption, and trustee services. Eligibility criteria sometimes exclude CaLD carers due to period of residency.
 - Ease the entry criteria for some family carers to migrate to Australia in order to reduce the burden of care in some situations. Often migrants and refugees have no extended family support in Australia.
 - Promote recognition of the important role of CaLD carers in the ethnic communities, recognising their skills and contribution, particularly in supporting the people they care for and assisting their independence and valued inclusion in their communities.

- Encourage the employment of bi-lingual/ bi-cultural carers in the disability carer industry as they bring to an organisation not only the advantages of their language skills but also cultural competency as well - integrated with their skills, knowledge and experience in the application of disability care in a cultural environment.

5. Provide cultural disability awareness training to all government and non-government agencies staff to meet cultural aspects of care standards as part of their funding agreements, standards and quality monitoring.

6. Provide inclusion and flexibility of choice for CaLD carers in employment, training and social activities by enabling them to balance this with their CaLD carer role responsibilities.

7. Offer opportunities and engage CaLD carers in longer term care planning within their culture-specific care needs, as they are often unaware of service options and innovative programs. Carer support information can be disseminated via the ethnic communities.