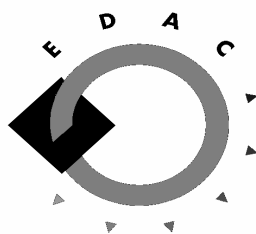


**Input into FECCA's submission to DIMA regarding the
responsiveness of government services to people from diverse
backgrounds –**

**access and equity issues for people with from CaLD
backgrounds with disabilities**

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into FECCA's submission to DIMA regarding the responsiveness of government services to people from diverse backgrounds. The Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (EDAC) is a community based organization which advocates for people with a disability from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds and their families in WA.

EDAC's response to the FECCA questionnaire will focus on those questions specifically related to access and equity for people with disabilities from CaLD backgrounds.

1. Looking at the principles from the Charter, including access and equity – which government agencies that you have encountered or dealt with, do you think exhibit best practice in meeting the needs of people from CaLD backgrounds?

The agencies that EDAC has dealt with that best exhibit best practice in meeting the needs of people with disabilities from CaLD backgrounds are those that specialise in the CaLD areas and issues. For example, the Transcultural Mental Health Unit as demonstrated high levels of cultural competence when we have worked with them. In addition the efficiency and competence of the Multicultural Services section of Centrelink has been identified by EDAC staff. These experiences have highlighted the need for CaLD specific services within all government agencies in order to best meet the needs of our diverse society.

3. Could you outline what you regard as best practice in relation to government delivery of government services for people from CLDB?

EDAC believes that to adequately, ethically and effectively engage and produce results for the CaLD population with disabilities, there is a need to incorporate and build on the significant contemporary developments in the cultural inclusion aspects of human rights, multicultural policy and citizenship. This is through developing guidelines for practical implementation throughout all aspects of services to support the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society.

Best practice models are those that work towards substantive equality for people with disabilities from CaLD backgrounds.

4. Which agencies in your opinion, have a poor track record in providing services to people from CLDB and what leads you to think this way?

From EDAC's experiences it seems that agencies in which our clients attempt to use mainstream services provide the least accessible services. For example, although the Multicultural Service Officers at Centrelink have been very helpful, when consumers from EDAC have attempted to use mainstream Centrelink services independently, they have often experienced great difficulties. For example, one individual advocate accompanied a consumer to an appointment with Centrelink where they waited for four hours before being attended to. The consumer did not have proficient English skills and without the advocate there, who constantly asked to be seen to, it is likely that he could have been forced to wait longer. EDAC has assisted a number of people with Centrelink issues as the consumers do not feel that the service they receive is culturally competent.

In addition, a number of agencies appear reluctant to utilize interpreter services. EDAC has found that Homeswest in particular, has not made adequate use of interpreters when explaining housing arrangements to people from CaLD backgrounds. For example, one family that EDAC worked with did not have any electricity for one week and did not realize that there was someone they could call to have this rectified.

9. In your opinion, are there any groups experiencing poorer access and equity to services than others and what is your feeling about why this might be happening?

EDAC is extremely concerned about the poor access and equity to services experienced by people with disabilities from CaLD backgrounds. This occurs across government (and non government) agencies. The poor access and equity experienced is highlighted through the fact that although people from CaLD backgrounds make up 14% of the population who have disabilities, they only represent 2.5% of people with disabilities accessing services.

EDAC believes that further research is required to identify the cause of this significant gap and would like to request the Australian government to immediately address this need. From EDAC's experience it is suggested that greater emphasis needs to be placed on substantive equality for people with disabilities from CaLD backgrounds to address this gap.

10. We are interested in the gap between policy frameworks that talk about promoting best practice in relation to access and equity and people's experience "at the counter" – what do you think are the main barriers to good policies being implemented?

EDAC believes that further emphasis is required on ensuring cultural competence of all staff within government agencies, particularly for staff who deal directly with consumers. There is also a requirement for sufficient budgetary allocation for this to occur. For example, Western Australia's Disability Services Commission has a budget of over \$300 million yet it is estimated that an extremely small portion is allocated to people from CaLD backgrounds despite the significant gap in services.