

MEDIA RELEASE



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OLDER AUSTRALIANS FROM MULTICULTURAL BACKGROUNDS DESERVE BETTER: ACSA

Federal and State Governments need to respond to Australia's increasingly diverse and rapidly ageing society by developing a comprehensive national policy, according to Australia's peak aged and community care body, Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA).

Launching its policy *Strength through Diversity* today at its annual conference, ACSA CEO Greg Mundy called on Governments to spell out a comprehensive policy to prepare for the sizeable increase in older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) who will need services over the next 20 years.

Greg Mundy said the policy highlights the critical areas Governments need to address. "While there are a range of measures to help CALD older people there is no clearly articulated comprehensive national vision or policy that will guide how the industry will provide care to the waves of people who will need it. It's time for a complete evaluation and comprehensive statement to take us through to 2020 and beyond."

"Here is a chance for Governments to look at ways of harnessing the pool of potential bi-lingual staff across Australia who could contribute to creating a welcoming, friendly and familiar environment for older Australians who speak a language other than English," Mr Mundy said.

"In today's multicultural Australia it is not enough to think that one system suits everyone: that is clearly not the case," said Petra Neeleman the CEO of DutchCare who took part in the policy launch. "Future planning should recognise that everything from menus through to geographic location and access to language-specific recreational services should be offered to our older Australians," she said.

"Although some ethno-specific services receive funding, the unwritten Commonwealth position still seems to be that generic services can cater for the needs of CALD older people with appropriate support," Ms Neeleman said.

"ACSA calls for a mixed service system that meets a range of cultural and language needs and differences," Mr Mundy said. "Increased emphasis and resources should be dedicated to improving the communication and cultural components of all aged and community care services, staffing, training, and research," he said.

New Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing Welcomed

ACSA also welcomed the launch today by the Minister for Ageing Senator Santoro of the new Centre for Cultural Diversity In Ageing which will provide services and training. Funded by the Federal Government, the centre will also offer an online resident handbook in 13 languages.

"This valuable service and its resources will help aged care facilities to meet the communication and information needs of their residents, family and staff," Mr Mundy said. "Even if they care for several residents from different backgrounds, they can now easily and accurately provide information on residential aged care in general and their own facility's services, fees and charges, food services, recreational facilities and so on to everyone."

ACSA Policy Strength and Diversity available at www.agedcare.org.au. Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing website: www.culturaldiversity.com.au. See also their separate media release detailing the initiatives.

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