

The Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) submission for the Inquiry into Palliative Care in Western Australia

The Department of Local Government, Sports and Cultural Industries Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) is pleased to respond to the invitation of the Legislative Council's Joint Select Committee on Palliative Care in Western Australia – Inquiry into Palliative Care in Western Australia.

OMI supports the establishment of a Joint Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council into palliative care in Western Australia and its terms of reference.

OMI aims to achieve the Government's vision of achieving equitable access, participation and outcomes in all aspects of life for Western Australians from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) backgrounds. The recommendations outlined are based on the [Western Australian Multicultural Policy Framework \(WAMPF\)](#).

The WAMPF was launched in March 2020 to articulate policy priorities and outcomes for WA state government. The framework seeks to create a socially cohesive society which maximises the potential of people from CaLD backgrounds to participate in the WA community and economy, and to have equitable access to services and information.

The framework focuses on three policy priority areas including:

- Harmonious and inclusive communities
- Culturally responsive policies, programs and services, and;
- Economic, social, cultural civic and political participation

The second policy priority of the WAMPF relates to culturally responsive policies, programs and services. OMI's submission concerning the establishment of the Joint Select Committee on Palliative Care in Western Australia focuses on the terms of reference to ensure greater equity of access and delivery of palliative care services.

OMI has noted that:

- The Report of the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices My Life, My Choice 40th Parliament, August 2020 identifies that palliative care was the single largest issue examined during the inquiry, and that much work is needed to ensure that palliative care services are able to keep pace with growing demand and growing community expectations.
- Specialists and individuals highlighted the need for education of both the public and health professionals about the benefits of palliative care. The Report makes several recommendations on improving understanding of and access to palliative care.

Sharing awareness and understanding of Palliative Care

- OMI emphasises the necessity of sharing information on palliative care to people from CaLD backgrounds. Many people may not understand the meaning of specialist palliative care, may not be aware where clients could receive palliative care services, be unable to access or navigate palliative care services, have no information of the types of in-home care available, have no knowledge of the limitations to palliative care, or what is meant by advance health care planning.
- [The Ageing in Multicultural Western Australia](#) publication recently released by OMI highlights significant increase in the demographic and cultural composition of older people in Western Australia, as well as the many socioeconomic factors impacting their engagement with many public sector agencies. These factors include low English proficiency, low or no education including digital literacy, underemployment and income, and a high need for assistance in core activities. All of these contribute to a cycle of vulnerability suffered by older people from CaLD backgrounds. This situation is especially pronounced for women.
- Without appropriate and relevant information available in multiple languages (including plain English) and through diverse channels of communication, people from CaLD backgrounds find it increasingly difficult to make informed decisions.
- It is important to note that within CaLD communities there is diversity. This is in relation to people's length of settlement in Australia, age, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, cultural beliefs and practices, mental health and disability status.

Culturally responsive policies, programs and service delivery

It is important for all organisations to be effective and inclusive in their operation, this can be achieved by:

- **culturally competent staff** who demonstrate empathy and openness, cultural awareness and understanding of different client groups and communities. Please note that OMI offers a free online [Diverse WA Cultural Competency](#) training program.
- **provision of language services** to ensure clients who are not proficient in spoken or written English have equitable access to complaints processes, programs and services and relevant information.

[The Language Services Policy](#) seeks to ensure limited competence in the English language is not a barrier to accessing services. Western Australians who may require assistance to communicate effectively include people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, Aboriginal people and people from CaLD backgrounds.

Staff need to be aware that clients who are not able to communicate in spoken and/or written English are made aware of:

- their right to communicate in their preferred language
- when and how to ask for an interpreter

- complaints processes
- **collection of cultural and linguistic data** that identifies the demographic profile of clients to contribute to evidence-based policy and program development. Data collection enables identification and analysis of community needs, levels of service access, and outcomes for diverse client groups. Please note the [Guide to Cultural and Linguistic Data Collection for the Public Sector](#)
- **engagement of diverse communities** in policy and program design, development, implementation and review. OMI encourages community engagement with CaLD communities and families, and engagement with non-government service providers that have CaLD specific experience and expertise. Cultural and religious practices and beliefs concerning complex health issues and death among different communities must be given special consideration. Please note the publication [Engaging Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities](#)

OMI highlights the importance of people from CaLD backgrounds to be able to:

- access information in their language of choice, and/or in alternative formats
- have access to qualified and suitable interpreters when dealing with a range of stakeholders including government
- be involved in the planning and implementation of service planning and be respected and included in all health care services.

OMI thanks the Joint Select Committee on Palliative Care in Western Australia for this opportunity to provide feedback on the establishment of a Joint Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council into palliative care in Western Australia.