

10 March 2022

Ms Katherine Murtagh  
Acting Research Officer  
Legal and Social Issues Committee  
Parliament House  
Spring Street, East Melbourne Victoria 3002

Dear Ms Murtagh

Thank you to the Legal and Social Issues Committee for the invitation to speak at one of its public hearings regarding the support needs for older Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds. There were two matters raised at that hearing for which I wish to supply additional information to the Committee.

### ***Addressing data limitations***

The first relates to the scarcity of data regarding how many migrants, refugees, carers and families live in Victoria. The original joint submission highlighted challenges in capturing full and consistent data regarding the number of carers from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

At the hearing, a Committee member queried whether Carers Victoria would support improvements to data collection so that demographic information reflects the diversity of all respondents and consistent data can be collected over time and Carers Victoria.

We see significant value in addressing current data gaps, but note a nuanced approach will be needed as sometimes people in these parts of the community are less likely to access/participate in mainstream data collections and/or may not identify with the term 'carer'. Thus, to gather accurate data, there would be merit in considering:

- Including questions in mainstream data collections (such as those undertaken by government departments) that alongside migrant/refugee status also elicit information about the kinds of tasks undertaken/carer responsibilities rather than asking someone if they are a carer.
- Supplement these with tailored approaches better suited to the specific nature of such groups, such as focus groups which have the flexibility to gather relevant and accurate information in tailored ways. Such approaches are more likely to

circumvent known barriers to participation in population-based surveys, such as those related to language.

Carers Victoria is exploring whether there is also scope to strengthen related content in the next National Carer Survey which is run biennially.

### ***Enhancing communication***

A committee member questioned how, in Carers Victoria's opinion, current arrangements for supporting communication with migrant and refugee community members seeking services could be enhanced. This question was raised in the context of an earlier discussion about the importance of interpreting services, and some of the challenges faced in accessing these.

Through further discussion with its staff who work directly with carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Carers Victoria has identified two practical actions that could enhance current arrangements:

1. A focus on supporting and training interpreters in small communities so that they too can access professional interpreting services rather than having to rely on community members. Such a focus also has the potential to build individual and community capacity and trust to access support services, a range of which may be outside their local community .
2. Expand the interpreter workforce for a range of language groups where currently difficulties are experienced in accessing interpreter services. For example, currently Carers Victoria staff report challenges accessing interpreters for people from the Karen community, as well as for Serbian, Lebanese, Arabic and Macedonian speakers.

We look forward to the Committee's final report, and to working with partners into the future to enhance supports for both older Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds who are carers, and for the people who care for older Victorians from those backgrounds. Thank you for the opportunity to participate.

Yours sincerely



Judith Abbott  
CEO