



Don't Coloured Australian Lives Matter Anymore?

The Ethnic Communities Council of WA (ECCWA) has welcomed the statement by Ms Christine Morgan, the CEO of the National Mental Health Commission that "appropriate support services and outreach into multicultural Australia need to be developed if anything is going to change".

Praising Ms. Morgan's timely intervention, ECCWA President, Ramdas Sankaran commended her and said that she was absolutely right in highlighting that "the challenges with the current system are that it's an expectation that they [culturally and linguistically diverse people] connect with the system - we have to turn that on its head."

"Our Council has been emphasising this for many years with empirical and other evidence but sadly it has fallen on deaf ears of politicians and senior bureaucrats at the federal and state levels", he added.

"WA was the first state in Australia to establish a Multicultural Psychiatric Centre but regrettably it no longer exists. Worse still access to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health service is woefully inadequate. This was another reason why it was critical to ensure the continuation of Partners in Recovery (PIR) program in WA as it operated before the federal election and for it **not to be transferred** to WAPHN.

We therefore urged the Coalition and the ALP to commit to the current four consortia being given this responsibility and in doing so also drew "their attention to a CaLD client who has had a mental health condition for 30 years and also has a cognitive impairment. His wife suffers from depression and NDIA has knocked him back. This is by no means an isolated case and so we asked the question **Don't Coloured Lives and those recovering from mental illness matter?** Unfortunately that fell on deaf ears too and the **only** provider that was established to service CaLD communities is **no longer providing PIR.**"

"We are very pleased to note Ms Morgan's confirmation that 'while no specific funding has yet been allocated for multicultural Australia, she does see a need for targeted programs within culturally and linguistically diverse communities', said Mr Sankaran.

"For far too long, the state and commonwealth governments have been pursuing a policy of mindless mainstreaming as reflected by the following examples", he added.

"The Coalition government's tender (\$1.3 million per year for three years) for a project titled 'Mental Health in Multicultural Australia' was restricted to three agencies and **ALL** were **mainstream** providers. Beyond Blue, which was one of them, to their credit did not bid for it."

"Other glaring examples include the fact that ethno specific and multicultural services providers have been receiving a **nanoscopic** portion of the millions of dollars of funding that the federal and state government have been expending on mental health and suicide prevention."

"In the first 8 months of the last financial year a member organisation reported **12 "suspected suicides"** within CaLD communities. The suicide of a young Nepalese girl led to the traumatic death by same method (hanging) of her partner who had struggled with the guilt and loss within 14 months of her death. There were 3 reported deaths by suicide in an Eritrean family. A 35 year old Afghani refugee widowed mother committed suicide leaving behind 5 young children 3-11 years old". (**Trigger warning: We urge you to seek appropriate advice from agencies if you require it.**)

"We look forward to working with Ms. Morgan and urge her to speedily finalise a national strategy to address harm reduction and suicide prevention within CaLD communities across Australia and to ensure that CaLD consumers and ethno-specific and multicultural service providers play a central role in it. Until that happens ECCWA will continue to publicly ask the question Why Don't Coloured Australian Lives Matter Anymore?"

For media enquiries contact Ramdas Sankaran on 0418275786 or Suresh Rajan on 0403276960.