

## **Victorian Transcultural Mental Health (VTMH) submission by Dr Can Tuncer on behalf of VTMH**

### **Support for older Victorian migrants and refugees**

Victorian Transcultural Mental Health (VTMH) is the lead transcultural and intersectional mental health service for the State of Victoria (<https://vtmh.org.au>). This service is funded by the Victorian State Government.

As mentioned in the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System's Recommendations (February 2021), Recommendation 22 states:

*The Victorian Government should:*

- *support services that meet the needs of older people;*
- *make sure older people can use the same services as other adults;*
- *set up services that support older people with mental health and wellbeing needs that come from getting older.*

Australia's most culturally diverse state is Victoria.

Ageing well might have different connotations for each person from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Therefore, person centred approach as part of intersectionality means every person is unique. The migration history of CALD migrants (pre, during and post-migration) have utmost significance in their mental health and wellbeing; especially older people from refugee backgrounds deserve more consideration about their circumstances.

Social isolation is a very important factor in older people of CALD background and especially under the difficult circumstances of COVID-19 environment becomes one of the most common and significant deteriorating factors in mental health.

Adequacy of services for older Victorian migrants and refugees should include:

- cultural safety and cultural responsiveness should be at the centre of all mental health service design and delivery;
- interpreting and language services should be available at any time;
- accessibility of services including accessible information in common local community languages;
- community members should be essential partners in the co-production and co-design (lived experience) of culturally responsive mental health services and programs;
- service design and providing services in collaboration with community and ethno-specific groups and organisations;
- collecting information and data and evaluation about CALD backgrounds in a sensitive way;

- peer support for carers, families and supporters, play significant role in mental health and well-being;
- partnerships with community organisations, specialist organisations, will enable up to date service to the Victorian seniors;
- effective workforce training should involve training in cultural safety and responsiveness
- special attention should be on awareness of dementia in CALD background migrants and refugees
- suicide prevention programs