



31 January 2022

The Committee Manager
Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Committee Manager

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Inquiry into Support for Older Victorians from Migrant and Refugee Backgrounds.

VicHealth was established by the Victorian Parliament in 1987 as the world's first health promotion foundation. We are a pioneer in health promotion – the process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health. Our primary focus is promoting good health and preventing chronic disease, including promoting physical activity, healthy eating and mental health and wellbeing, and preventing risky alcohol consumption and tobacco use.

This submission provides a response to the Terms of Reference (ToR) in regard to:

- ToR (b) unique challenges faced by this cohort, including, but not limited to, social isolation, civic participation, digital literacy, elder abuse and access to culturally appropriate aged care and home care services; and
- ToR (c) ideas to advance the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Victoria's multicultural seniors including global best practices.

VicHealth recommends the following to develop supports for older Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Promoting physical activity

- Creation of age-friendly cities and communities that promote active travel and provide accessible and safe road and footpath networks that cater for differing mobility levels.
 - Reduce barriers to walking through maintaining footpaths and walkways, installing adequate lighting, improved road and cycling safety around footpaths and shared walking and bike riding paths.¹
- Ensure access to open space, such as sports and recreational facilities and green space that support this age cohort to be active, to increase participation in physical activity, both structured and unstructured, and promote wellbeing. Examples include the Walking Football program, a modified low-impact version of football that can engage people from all levels of ability and fitness.²

¹ Garrard, J 2013, 'Senior Victorians and Walking: Obstacles and Opportunities, Final Report', *Victoria Walks*, viewed 17 January 2022, <https://www.victoriawalks.org.au/Assets/Files/FINALSeniorsFullReport.pdf>

² VicHealth, 'Walking Football: a new type of football to suit everyone', viewed 24 January 2022, <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/our-work/health-promotion-in-action/walking->

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Patrons

The Honourable Linda Dessau AC
Governor of Victoria (Patron-in-Chief)
Professor Emeritus
Sir Gustav Nossal AC CBE

Access to healthy options

- Ensuring access to affordable and culturally appropriate food within their local neighbourhood.
- Ensuring food relief providers are supported to adequately support older Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds, ensuring that services are accessible to people with varying abilities, English proficiency and ensuring food provided is culturally appropriate.
- Ensuring the provision of culturally appropriate food in aged care.
- Support the creation of community gardens to allow older migrants and refugees to grow culturally appropriate food. Community gardens also offer opportunities for social connection through low impact activity which can be particularly useful for this cohort.
 - Examples include the Food from Home community garden network that encourages connection to food cultures, food origins, family and community and encourages the sharing of food stories and knowledge within the community.³

Fostering social connection

- Ensure communities have a range of activities that promote social connection and wellbeing among older Victorians that cater to the diverse backgrounds and languages of Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds. An example the 'Cooking, Recovery and Connections' initiative, provided a community-driven response to support connection and wellbeing for public housing residents living in North Melbourne and Flemington during the pandemic. 'Cooking, Recovery and Connections' is a cookbook with 18 recipes and artwork contributed from residents from a huge diversity of cultural backgrounds including Somalian, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Indian, Egyptian, and South Sudanese.⁴
- Ensuring migrant and refugee women have culturally appropriate and safe spaces to access for physical activity and social connection.
- Ensuring health messaging and campaigns are accessible and available in the languages used in migrant and refugee communities.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our submission further. Should you wish to do so, please contact [REDACTED].

Kind regards



Dr Sandro Demaio
Chief Executive Officer

³ Food From Home, viewed 17 January 2022, <https://foodfromhome.org/>

⁴ Cooking, Recovery & Connections 2020, *cohealth*, viewed 17 January 2022, <https://www.cohealth.org.au/news/cooking-recovery-connections/>