FINAL TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Support for Older Victorians from Migrant and Refugee Backgrounds

Melbourne—Friday, 18 February 2022

MEMBERS

Ms Natalie Suleyman—Chair

Mr Brad Battin—Deputy Chair

Mr Neil Angus

Ms Christine Couzens

Ms Emma Kealy

Ms Michaela Settle

Mr Meng Heang Tak

WITNESSES *(via videoconference)*

Ms Vivienne Nguyen, Chairperson, and

Mr Hakan Akyol, Executive Senior Adviser, Victorian Multicultural Commission.

The CHAIR: I declare open the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee public hearing for the Inquiry into Support for Older Victorians from Migrant and Refugee Backgrounds.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting. I pay my respects to their elders, both past and present, and any other Aboriginal elders of other communities who may be here today.

I welcome Vivienne Nguyen, the Chairperson for VMC, and also Hakan Akyol from VMC as well.

I also acknowledge my colleagues participating today. At the moment I have Neil Angus, the Member for Forest Hill, who is present on the screen; and we will be joined at some point—they have got some technical difficulties at the moment—by Christine Couzens, the Member for Geelong; and Meng Heang Tak, the Member for Clarinda.

Please ensure all mobile phones have been switched to silent and any background noise is minimised.

All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. Therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you repeat the same things outside this hearing, including on social media and other platforms, these comments may not be protected by this privilege.

All evidence given today is being recorded by the Hansard team and is being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. Please note that footage can only be rebroadcast in accordance with the conditions set out by standing order 234. You will be provided with the proof version of the transcript following this hearing. Transcripts will be made public and posted on the committee's website. Could I please remind members and witnesses to mute their microphones when not speaking, just to minimise any interference. If you have any technical difficulties at any stage, please disconnect and contact the committee staff using the contacts that you have been provided with.

I now invite you to proceed with a brief opening statement to the committee, which will be then followed by questions from members. Thank you very much for being here. Good morning.

Ms NGUYEN: Good morning, Chair. Thank you very much. Let me formally start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands on which we are gathered for this important conversation today and pay my respects to their elders past and present. For me, it is the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, and I pay my respects to their elders past and present and any other Aboriginal elders or leaders joining us for this important meeting this morning.

Chair, let me start with a little bit about the role of the Victorian Multicultural Commission and what we do. Then we will go into our thinking around this submission, and I will hand it over to Hakan before I formally conclude our presentation to you with some of our key messages.

As you know, the Victorian Multicultural Commission is a statutory body designed to be the conduit between the multicultural and multifaith community and the government. In terms of structure, we have 12 commissioners: a Chairperson—that is me—working in the role full time; the deputy commissioner, working in the role three days a week; and the remaining 10 commissioners, acting, if you like, similarly to board members, where they attend monthly meetings and also undertake any other roles and responsibilities for the commission as required under the legislation and in addition to their passion for and interest in multicultural affairs.

We are appreciative of the committee's interest in the older population in the community, and particularly older people from the multicultural, multifaith community and in particular people from newly arrived communities—new and emerging—and people from refugee backgrounds. This is an important area, and we appreciate your commitment to this, particularly in light of the COVID pandemic, when we have literally had to move all of our activities online. That really put a spotlight on the digital capability, or lack thereof, of senior citizens, and exacerbating that was language; they were not able to access timely information. With respect to accessing news and information overseas, that really created, in our opinion, a fair bit of concern in the community. We believe, though, with greater support and collaboration from government departments and communities, that senior citizens can really play a role, even in the latter part of their life, in making sure that

we have a harmonious, efficient and productive economy, but also that their life can be further enhanced, thereby reducing the impact on our public health system.

Let me now turn to our recommendations and our suggestions for this particular submission. We have provided you with our PowerPoint presentation and also in that presentation a bit of information about the demographics. That demographic information suggests that the senior citizens in Victoria will be extremely culturally and faith diverse, requiring any thinking around policy, systems design and implementation, along with monitoring and reporting, to really deeply involve the community.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety report also highlighted the need for greater improvement in involvement from the multicultural, multifaith community. With that background and against that backdrop, we provide the following in terms of our recommendations.

First, in terms of the multicultural policy and/or diversity plans, we fundamentally believe that there needs to be a greater involvement of the multicultural community, particularly in co-design, in thinking about how a program would actually work for them and affect their everyday life.

Second, in terms of capacity and capability—and there is a fair bit of work happening at the moment—we believe there is a greater need to involve the multicultural, multifaith, ethno-specific organisations as service providers as part of the system as opposed to as complementary to the system. That goes to the heart of the workforce diversity, the understanding of the cultural and religious diversity in our community and the nuances in the way in which we message, deliver and collect data as evidence. We have seen over the last two years in this pandemic there is a great deal of nuance, and a one-size-fits-all approach to anything, whether it be communication, service delivery or messaging, does not work for us, particularly when we have potential crises or pandemics that can affect a particular group of our communities more deeply than others. As we have seen in this pandemic, people of different cultural backgrounds are far more impacted in comparison to the rest of the community, partly because of where we work, the industries that we are involved in, the way in which we come together to celebrate life and promote diversity, and also—to be frank and to reflect the report from the ABS that was launched yesterday on COVID morbidity—vulnerability and wealth, or lack thereof, does make it worse for people from multicultural communities.

Third, in terms of education, awareness and engagement, we believe that there needs to be greater availability in terms of access, whether it be to information or whether it be through greater health literacy, mental health wellbeing information, digital literacy, elder abuse support or even palliative care and bereavement services. For all of these services information should be made available in languages but also more importantly in ways and modes that are more relevant and applicable and in fact more productive to the communities—that is, for example, using trusted leaders, influencers and the multicultural, multifaith community organisations.

In terms of systems change, I have just touched on the voice of the community. It is really important so that programs, when implemented, can be far more productive and efficient than would otherwise be the case. The need to have greater data collection—numbers and figures are important, but also the lived experience, the anecdotes and the case studies from the communities, we believe, should form part of the data collection and help shape and inform the way in which we understand and therefore respond to community needs.

Discrimination and racism are really important as well, and an area to address, and we acknowledge the work currently underway by the government in establishing a whole-of-Victorian-government strategy on anti-racism. We think that is also a very significant piece of work that this government is currently undertaking. In terms of workforce diversity, we believe that greater involvement from people from the diverse workforce will certainly help, because they too bring with them the cultural understanding, the religious nuances and ways in which messages can be delivered or understood and embraced by their community far better, and leveraging the whole of the diversity of the workforce will certainly help towards that.

Representation is another significant point we put forward to you today. As per this government's policy on 'We can't be what we can't see', we think representation in leadership is another important area that certainly needs a greater spotlight on it. And it is not just cultural diversity; there are a number of other lenses and lived experiences that should be considered. So, Chair and members of the committee, I will now hand over to Hakan before I formally conclude our presentation with our key messages. Hakan, over to you.

Mr AKYOL: Thanks, Viv. I just wanted to confirm that you have received the PowerPoint, or did you want me to just share that on screen?

The CHAIR: If you can just share that on the screen as your submission, that would be great. Thank you.

Visual presentation.

Mr AKYOL: Viv has covered a lot of the key points, but if I can just sort of reinforce that aspect. We acknowledge the fact that you have received quite a significant number of submissions, including from some critical organisations like the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, a number of ethno-specific multicultural organisations and NARI in terms of their shared one as well as the Municipal Association of Victoria, and they do provide some specifics and comprehensive recommendations in terms of the level of detail that we commend to you for your consideration.

Viv has outlined the context in terms of the diversity et cetera in terms of the demographics. That is a critical aspect in terms of how we move forward and plan and how government departments and community in collaboration plan for the changing demographics. The proportion of the 65-plus age group has increased over the last 20 years significantly, and that is predicted to continue. Importantly, some of those changes within the make-up of that demographic in terms of the non-English speaking background is also going to change in terms of an increase as a proportion from Asian backgrounds relative to European backgrounds. But nevertheless there is a significant growth, and I believe Victoria does have, in broad terms, the most multicultural society but also in terms of the age group cohort when compared with other states and territories. So it makes it even more important that those demographics and the changes are taken into account.

Viv has mentioned the royal commission in terms of their identification, and that is not inconsistent with other royal commissions in other areas, whether it is mental health, family violence et cetera that have identified that the services are not adequately catering to diversity and that there needs to be more undertaken. The critical thing in that regard—Viv has gone through some of the policy areas and community capacity—is the notion of ethno-specific multicultural organisations being part of the system rather than being a side part or the past discussions or debates around ethno-specific or mainstream. It is our view that they should be considered as complementary parts and that there are benefits provided in those partnerships. I think we have seen particularly through the COVID experience that there has been a greater effort and acknowledgement that the role of ethno-specific, faith-based and community organisations can play a critical role in not only communicating information but also providing the supports and delivery of the services.

That sort of comes to the systems area that Viv outlined. Data collection outcome measures are critical in terms of identifying not only who is using services, who is under-represented and then correlating that with the demographics and ensuring that questions are raised as to which cohorts are under-represented and get better access. As Viv has also mentioned, the workforce diversity, whether it be in the public sector or in service providers, and the need for the workforce to be reflective of the community they serve is critical in terms of building up cultural understanding and awareness, but that also needs to be complemented with cultural competency training, awareness and other sorts of systems in place there. And Viv has also mentioned the representation and the importance of decision-making bodies, committees and advisory committees being reflective of the community that the agencies serve. I will leave it at that.

Ms NGUYEN: Thank you, Hakan. If I may sum up our presentation to you, Chair and committee members, with three brief points. First, we believe that government needs to do differently in approaching the design, the implementation and the monitoring of programs and services to the community, particularly in this particular aspect of older citizens from refugee and migrant backgrounds. That can be reflected through greater departmental committees working together and greater accountability across different government departments. We hear a lot, of course, through the pandemic that the different departments do different things, and they do not necessarily—or they could do more, if I may use that term—work together, because from the community's point of view or the recipient's point of view, we cannot differentiate whether this is the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing or whether it is the Department of Justice and Community Safety. We see the needs and we want to see the needs addressed. So we think greater departmental collaboration and accountability and transparency is something that we see governments could do better and more on.

The second point, and I would just like to emphasise something that Hakan mentioned as well, is the role of the community sector. I acknowledge there needs to be some greater capacity building for the community sector, but they too can play a significant role, whether it be through workforce diversity, through cultural and religious intelligence, in supporting government in messaging and understanding the messages and following the directions—a whole myriad of things we believe the community sector can play a role in.

Then the third point I would like to also mention is the community expects that we work with government to have the service delivered, with us together, and not to have things done for us. This goes to the heart of civic engagement and participation, as per the legislation, and the heart of our democracy.

So on that, Chair and committee members, we thank you for your commitment in making sure that a greater spotlight is put on this particular aspect of our society. We express our appreciation to you and your commitment to this work and acknowledge the work of the commissioner for senior Victorians, Gerard Mansour, the department and everyone in making this possible. Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Viv and Hakan. That was a substantial submission. Before I open for questions I do want to acknowledge my colleagues. Christine Couzens, MP, the Member for Geelong, is here now; and Meng Heang Tak, MP, the Member for Clarinda. They did have some technical difficulties. It is great to see you online now. Members, do we want to begin with some questions? I will start with Neil and move on to Christine.

Mr ANGUS: Thank you very much, Chair. And thanks, Viv and Hakan, for your presentation today—most informative. I suppose, Viv, I am interested to know whether VMC has done any work in terms of looking at other jurisdictions and how they are dealing with the multitude of challenges and issues that their various communities are experiencing in the seniors multicultural area as well. Have you looked elsewhere?

Ms NGUYEN: Thanks, Neil. We have not done any deep-dive research into this particular portfolio. However, what we do do as part of our, if you like, business as usual, is regularly touching base and having official forums, if you like, or regular forums, for us to come together and exchange information and share research materials and experiences that other agencies do do in this particular area. From what we understand the experiences of senior or older people, particularly from newly arrived and refugee communities, are not different across the board. They are very similar. Their issues are not attended to because of all of the factors that we have outlined—language, information overseas, reliance on their children or grandchildren's language. Those aspects are very much similar across the board, and that is why we support all of the work that is more specific to other agencies and departments that do do deep-dive research, and we learn from those and share those as part of our submission today as well. Hakan, is there anything you want to add?

Mr AKYOL: No, that is consistent. We have not had specific discussions in terms of aged care, but the experience over time is that there are similar issues about communication, engagement and cultural appropriateness. They are consistent. I would not be able to give you an outline of any other specific programs that might exist, bearing in mind that to a large extent, in terms of overarching aged-care service delivery, whether it is residential care or home or community care, community aged-care packages are the responsibility of the Commonwealth. They provide the overarching guidelines and program directions and policy. But I suspect some of the other organisations, like COTA et cetera, might have some additional specific information. NARI, in terms of the research—and I think that they presented previously—have also highlighted, as others have in some of their submissions, that there is a lack of detailed research with respect to older people of non-English-speaking or migrant and refugee backgrounds in terms of both their needs and experiences with services. So there needs to be some further work and research done in terms of identifying that.

Mr ANGUS: Okay. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Christine.

Ms COUZENS: Thanks, Chair, and thank you both for your comprehensive contribution today. We do really appreciate it. I have got a couple of questions. One is: do you see that there is any significant difference between regional Victoria and Melbourne metro in the services provided? What might these differences be, and how can we meet those challenges?

Ms NGUYEN: Thank you, Christine. We do see differences in metro and regional Victoria across all things multicultural and multifaith. Some of that might be because of the way in which settlement patterns have occurred or because of the sheer size, and therefore certain services might not be available, and also because of the less than adequate diversity that is reflected in service providers in regional Victoria. That could come from a range of things—for example, there might not be adequate resources provided to them to cater for diversity and so on and so forth. We do see the differences, and that happens across older persons, family violence, mental health, employment and many of the key portfolios that we are seeing across the community.

How might we be able to do that? We have a couple of suggestions, but perhaps those suggestions may require further thinking, Christine. The first thing that we think is really important is the engagement of the community. The voice of the community really needs to be there. And it is really good to have a mainstream organisation representing, say, the Karen community in Ballarat or Bendigo to say, 'We think these are the needs of the Karen community'. We—the VMC—really appreciate that, but how about having members of the Karen community tell the departments, whether it be about employment or mental health or family violence or whatever, 'These are our issues'. I think sometimes that deeper engagement really helps us understand more deeply and in a more nuanced way how programs could be thought about, considered and implemented. We think the first point is really that greater engagement and that point I have mentioned in one of my three summary points about how we want to see things—working with government, not having things done for us. We really think that that thinking should be really seriously reconsidered. If there is not anything else, deep engagement is one thing that we really recommend. Hakan.

Mr AKYOL: I just reinforce what Viv said but also acknowledge the infrastructure that does exist in regional areas as well. It is in a different area, but we are working with the Department of Health, emergency management and the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, but more specifically in terms of the regional ethnic community councils—there are seven of those across regional Victoria—about embedding those organisations into the emergency management structure in partnership with the primary health service providers where there is an emergency, not just in terms of a pandemic context but also in terms of any emergency, whether it be natural disasters or otherwise, building in and connecting in with the regional ethnic communities councils as part of the planning process and recovery process in terms of emergency management. Better utilising those organisations, which are peak bodies in those various locations, as part of the development of programs, policies, services and collaborations at the local level and regional level is quite critical.

Ms COUZENS: Great. Thank you for that. My other question was: how can the Victorian state government and councils improve the capacity of the workforce to provide culturally inclusive and trauma-informed care?

Ms NGUYEN: I will have a go at that, Christine, and Hakan, please feel free to add. For us to be able to do better at it we believe there should be a bit more data and there should be a bit more consideration of the experiences of the community. We also believe right at the outset the settlement programs should really be taking into account some of the challenges and the issues that the community, if you like, bring with them, whether it be from a war-torn country, coming to Australia as part of a humanitarian program—I think taking into account that experience right at the outset will help us take a greater view on prevention and attend to the issues sooner rather than later.

We see that this might be a federal domain, but the settlement programs can be very rigid, if I could use that term, in their implementation. Again, box ticking can be quite problematic when it comes to implementation. So we need flexibility around the ways in which we implement programs, and that comes from understanding the issues experienced by the cohorts we serve and being able to have the confidence to have flexibility in the program. Sometimes departments find that flexibility a little bit challenging because of whatever it is, whether it be concerns about FOI or concerns about whatever the case might be. Changing things in a program whilst it is being implemented can be a little bit challenging. So that is the first thing—really having that context and thinking about prevention and really measuring the impact of prevention as opposed to dealing with issues at the tail end.

The capacity for the community is about making sure that they are part of the system. When they are not part of the system what they get is project funding, and project funding does not enable organisations to build capacity. They need to be part of the structure. They need to be part of the service delivery structure so they have the opportunity to bid for funding and projects and programs and are able to be part of the system. In our opinion that could be done a lot better than where we are at the moment.

Mr AKYOL: I was just going to say, in terms of how to assist both service providers and councils et cetera, it goes back to some of the points that were raised earlier. One is about what we have mentioned about partnerships; two is about that workforce diversity. Having a workforce that is reflective of the community will better enable cultural awareness, nuances and understanding within the organisation itself, but we also need some cultural competency training for the workforce and that capacity building.

In terms of settlement and Victorian government programs: one of the gaps that existed compared to what the Commonwealth was funding in terms of settlement service providers was that the Victorian government did provide, through the multicultural affairs portfolio, funding for strategic partnerships and engagement officers, and a number of those are located across regional Victoria. The critical aspect of those strategic partnerships was the need for that project to be a partnership that included a peak multicultural organisation, such as a regional ethnic communities council; a settlement service provider—in some cases they were the same—and the local council, and they needed to work together in identifying what the specific needs were in refugee and newly arrived communities and develop plans to work across those. So that was partly to address silo-type approaches and to actually bring organisations together. And that was a funding model based on that.

The other aspect in broader terms and in terms of regional Victoria, with both Commonwealth and state governments for a long time, and there has been a greater emphasis more recently, it has been about regional settlement, so encouraging regional settlement and development. In terms of the needs that we are talking about, whether it is in aged care or other settlement services et cetera, that need will hopefully—not necessarily hopefully; do not take that the wrong way—grow, so if there is going to be increasing settlement in regional Australia, the needs and responsiveness of services need to address that.

Ms COUZENS: Great. Thank you both very much.

The CHAIR: Any further questions, members?

Mr TAK: Chair, Heang here.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Heang.

Mr TAK: Thank you, Chair. Thanks, Viv and Hakan, for your presentation. I am very much interested in what you said before about building capacity and also about data collection. But allow me to say two things before my question. I observed through experience during this COVID pandemic that VMC has done a lot of work in terms of engagement and to make sure that every bit of information is passing through to the community and in engaging with community leaders. My question, Viv and Hakan, is: migrant communities, including me, do not want to be seen as a burden on society. We want to be part of the building. You know, we want to build this community together as part of a bigger structure. So how can data be better collected in order to provide appropriate participation for the older, senior community members from migrant and refugee backgrounds?

Ms NGUYEN: Thank you, Heang, for the question, and I appreciate your comment in relation to the work of the VMC over the last couple of years. We see data collection as this, Heang: it is both about the needs and the challenges, but it is also about the preventative side of things. For older citizens, a healthier and happier life will mean, if you like, being less of a burden on the public health system. Also, for them they have made a significant contribution throughout their working life. In the latter part of their life we believe that they need to be well respected and looked after and the like. So that would also mean making sure that the services that are provided to them by the providers are adequate and that the pay structure of the workforce that is supporting them at this stage of their life is also something that needs to be properly considered. The greater quality and safeguards around the quality of the services and the quality of care should be considered as well. So when we talk about data collection, we are talking about the experience of the users of the system and the structure and how that can then be fed back so that the system gets better in the quality of its delivery and in the inclusiveness of the various programs and structures available. Hakan.

Mr AKYOL: I was going to say, I acknowledge the issue in terms of, within some communities and certainly within some individuals, the hesitancy of coming forward in terms of the notion of either being a burden or having a stigma attached to the need to reach out or that the support should be from within the family or within the community to a certain extent. But I think the critical issue is about getting that information out

and making it so that this is actually something to assist and support communities, and that it is okay to come forward to seek help and assistance, whether it is with mental health or in any other areas.

In terms of data collection, as Viv has mentioned, the collation of that data in a comprehensive way across the board, whilst there is an element of administrative burden that sometimes is the pushback factor, would actually help in the long term by getting greater clarity on who is using the service and who is not using the service and then utilising that to better target, communicate and engage with communities. It will have a sort of beneficial effect. It will over time also have economic benefits, so if you are providing greater preventative health programs, awareness and supports for the communities at the early stages, whether it be a health issue et cetera, that will delay the need for more intensive care or support or will prevent that in the longer term. So there are both wellbeing issues that are fundamentally important and access issues that are fundamentally important, but if you deliver the programs and supports at the earliest possible time, then there are actually economic benefits downstream in terms of net costs on the state, federal and local services, economies and budgets.

Mr TAK: Chair, if I may perhaps ask another question—

The CHAIR: Sure, Heang.

Mr TAK: In terms of the economic benefits, early prevention and all of that, in my experience of community participation from elder citizens, normally we go to a temple, mosque or church and we see a lot of seniors. But do you think that there is greater engagement from all levels of government in terms of seniors? Because they actually built the temples, they built the mosques and they built the churches themselves. But I do not know how much engagement we have, because from time to time we see disputes within the organisations, whether small or big, and then this leads to isolation in terms of inclusiveness and a feeling of belonging to the community. We do not want anyone to be left out.

Mr AKYOL: Viv?

Ms NGUYEN: Disputes between community organisations, Heang, I think is something that happens literally with just about any community. What I do think, though, is if there is greater support around governance—and over the course of many years through Consumer Affairs and various legislative changes there has been a great deal of support for organisations in terms of their governance responsibility—that obviously also comes with some administrative cost, if you like, for community organisations. And that is part and parcel of what we always call for in terms of capacity building, understanding organisations' ability and capability to be able to deal with issues and for government to understand a bit more deeply which organisations have capacity and the skills to be able to do stuff, if you like, with proper governance and oversight, and whether or not government departments should also have greater flexibility in their grants assessment structure or in their monitoring and oversight of government grants. We should also build that in so that they have greater oversight of community projects and capacity building and the like. So we think there is a bit more work that could be done there in making sure that there is the structure and the governance and that tax-funded dollars are appropriately expended.

In terms of knowing the senior community a bit more, we work very closely with the faith communities through our Multifaith Advisory Group, and they have been very proactive in working with the Department of Health over the last two years around rules and restrictions to access places of worship and places of worship as providers of essential services such as food relief and the like. So through that and through the support of the faith communities senior citizens are also engaged, perhaps not directly but indirectly, through those channels.

Mr AKYOL: If I can just very quickly—I am sort of conscious of time—

The CHAIR: Very quickly.

Mr AKYOL: Before the Chair shuts me up, just a general point in terms of disputes—they are not unique to multicultural, ethno-specific or faith-based organisations in terms of governance issues and so forth. It occurs in all sectors and at all levels, so that is that part. The other aspect in terms of engaging seniors and older people: the 900-plus ethno-specific multicultural organisations that exist are critical conduits. You would know that government provides funding to those and there was some additional funding through the task force in terms of the COVID response over the last two years as well. So they are critical as mediums not only for the individual benefits in terms of addressing social isolation and active wellbeing, but they also provide mediums through

which government departments and local services can better connect and provide services and information, and that capacity to support those organisations further can be enhanced. Partly that is to do with partnerships with local councils, and there are some great programs in individual councils—and I know that MAV will be talking to you shortly and we are probably holding them up. But if I may be so bold, looking at what councils do and looking at the consistency across the 79 LGAs in terms of access to facilities, meeting spaces and the supports that councils do provide considerably and incredibly well, whether it is recreation activities, health programs and a whole range of engagement programs, how that is done and how that is consistent across the board is an area that could be looked at and improved over time. That access to facilities and venues—in some cases there are venue hire fees et cetera, and councils provide some support to certain groups, but there might be other groups who are missing out. But also again, given the population demographics changing and the growth occurring, including more diverse communities, there will be a need to support new ethno-specific or faith-specific seniors across groups, so there will be a need for more than the 900 out there. Providing support to those groups and new groups is going to be critical, and better supporting those through councils, state government and Commonwealth will be important.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Hakan. I do have to conclude. I understand, Neil, you have got a very quick question.

Mr ANGUS: Thank you, Chair. Just a very quick one to you, Viv: in relation to engaging with younger members of the multicultural community and trying to get them to connect with and be involved in helping some of the senior members, has the commission done any work in that area?

Ms NGUYEN: Yes, we do have our youth commissioner, Neil, we do run roundtable discussions reaching out to youth-related organisations and we provide a lot of recommendations to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing through their Fairer Vic division and in that through the culturally and linguistically diverse task force set up by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. There is a lot of work that is being done there. It is not a significant part of the VMC's portfolio, if you like, but we do do an element of that in conjunction with other areas within the youth portfolio and agencies.

Mr ANGUS: Great. Okay, thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I do have to conclude. On behalf of the committee, Viv and Hakan, thank you so much for taking the time to submit to the committee, and your in-depth submission has been thoroughly—as you can see, we could have gone on for a little bit longer, but thank you again on behalf of the committee.

Witnesses withdrew.