

Committee on Community Services



LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY

# Improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities



Report 3/57 – January 2023

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The motto of the coat of arms for the state of New South Wales is "Orta recens quam pura nites". It is written in Latin and means "newly risen, how brightly you shine".

# Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Membership _____  | ii  |
| Chair’s foreword _____  | iii |
| Summary _____   | v   |
| Findings and recommendations _____  | ix  |
| Chapter One – Recognising and supporting CALD community organisations during crises ____                                      | 1   |
| CALD community organisations played a vital role in supporting communities during COVID-19 __                                 | 1   |
| Collaboration between government and CALD community organisations is key to effective crisis communication _____              | 5   |
| Increasing CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community involvement in crisis preparation and communication _____ | 9   |
| Supporting CALD community organisations to communicate with their communities _____   | 13  |
| Chapter Two – Improving channels of communication with CALD communities during crises   | 17  |
| Community groups and networks to co-design tailored crisis communications _____   | 17  |
| Crisis communications delivered through a range of channels _____   | 23  |
| A crisis communications strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities _____                                  | 27  |
| Funding for community and multilingual broadcast media _____  | 29  |
| Chapter Three – Preventing racism and discrimination during crises _____  | 32  |
| Racism and discrimination increased during COVID-19 _____   | 32  |
| Working with the CALD community to combat racism and discrimination during crises _____                                       | 37  |
| Appendix One – Terms of reference _____   | 41  |
| Appendix Two – Conduct of inquiry _____   | 42  |
| Appendix Three – Submissions _____  | 43  |
| Appendix Four – Witnesses _____   | 44  |
| Appendix Five – Extracts from minutes _____   | 46  |

# Membership

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Chair</b>           | The Hon Melinda Pavey MP (from 17 May 2022)<br>Ms Wendy Lindsay MP (until 31 March 2022)   |
| <b>Deputy Chair</b>    | Mr Justin Clancy MP (from 17 May 2022)<br>Mr Dugald Saunders MP (until 31 March 2022)  |
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## Chair's foreword

Effective communication is essential during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and recent natural disasters. Ensuring that people have access to crisis-related information can mean the difference between life and death. Reaching all members of our community is all the more important given that people born outside Australia and those in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were more vulnerable to serious disease and death during the pandemic.

The Committee heard that trusted CALD community organisations and community leaders have played a vital part in crisis communications during the COVID-19 pandemic. They ensured that their communities received public health messages and arranged practical assistance, such as grocery shopping and children's school kits. Community groups helped to keep their communities informed and maintained community connections during a difficult and isolating period.

We have recommended that the NSW Government works with CALD community organisations on ways to support the sector to effectively deliver crisis communications, for example, through additional funding or capacity building.

During our inquiry we heard that collaboration between Government and CALD community organisations and networks is essential to effective crisis communications. Maintaining and drawing on established relationships with community groups is key to making information accessible to CALD communities. Partnerships between Government agencies and CALD community groups helped to improve the effectiveness of messaging about the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government's response to COVID-19 encouraged cross-government collaboration to provide co-ordinated crisis communications.

Inquiry participants told us that CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need to be more involved in crisis planning and communication. Rather than an ad hoc approach, there should be more formal opportunities for input into crisis communications and decision making. This could be through a community advisory committee or taskforce, or representation on local emergency management committees.

We found that a targeted crisis communications strategy is needed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to ensure they can access culturally appropriate crisis messaging. The NSW Government should work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to develop the strategy.

Inquiry participants told us that crisis communications should be delivered in a range of formats, via multiple channels to meet the needs of CALD community cohorts. Messaging should be provided in formats including print, audio and video and made available via social media platforms and events like public forums. It's important that material is translated into a wide range of community languages by native speakers with current knowledge of each language.

We also heard that community and multilingual broadcast media is an important, trusted source of crisis-related information for CALD communities. We have recommended that the Government increases funding for community and multilingual media to ensure that it is

sufficient for the sector to continue providing information to CALD communities, including crisis communications.

Giving CALD communities the opportunity to co-design crisis communications can ensure that messaging is culturally appropriate and targeted to communities. Community input would also mean that crisis communications can more effectively engage communities, and help to prevent errors such as mistranslations. We therefore encourage the NSW Government to work with CALD communities to co-design future crisis communications.

Inquiry participants told us that racism and discrimination increased during the pandemic. Racism and discrimination towards CALD communities during crises cause trauma and a loss of trust in Government. It also has a negative impact on social cohesion and means that communities may be less receptive to the Government's crisis messaging. We acknowledge that CALD communities in South and South-Western Sydney felt that they were unfairly targeted during COVID-19. We recommend that the NSW Government works with CALD community groups and community leaders to develop policies and strategies to combat racism and discrimination during crises.

We heard about many positive Government and community-led projects that improved crisis messaging to CALD communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We encourage the NSW Government to maintain partnerships with CALD community groups and leaders and continue working to ensure that crisis messaging is accessible for everyone in our community.

On behalf of the Committee, I thank all those who made a submission and gave evidence during the inquiry. I thank Committee members for their valuable contributions to this report. I also thank the Committee staff for their support.

**The Hon Melinda Pavey MP**  
Chair

## Summary

### **Community organisations were key to crisis communications during COVID-19**

Community organisations and community leaders were a key source of information during COVID-19 for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. They are established, trusted voices who understand language and cultural nuances and have existing relationships with communities.

We heard that community organisations and community leaders did vital work with CALD communities during the pandemic. This included conveying health and emergency messages and providing practical support to their communities. Community organisations translated health messages, produced in-language information resources and used online forums and information sessions to reach their communities. Organisations continued their case management work with clients and also provided practical support such as grocery shopping, delivering food and frozen meals, care packages and school kits for children.

### **Collaboration is essential to effective crisis communication**

Collaboration between CALD community organisations and government is vital to delivering effective crisis communication to CALD communities. During the pandemic, community organisations worked with different levels of government and non-government organisations to convey COVID-19 related messages and deliver support to communities. We heard that partnerships, online forums and taskforces set up by community groups helped to connect communities, guide communications and test the effectiveness of crisis messaging.

The NSW Government recognised the importance of collaboration and community engagement and feedback in its COVID-19 response. The Government's Delta Micro Strategy, for example, simplified governance structures to provide more targeted support to Western and South-West Sydney and to allow cross-government collaboration. The Government worked with community groups, community leaders and media broadcasters to distribute COVID-19 related information, and a community sentiment project was set up to get feedback on the effectiveness of government crisis communications.

We heard that there was an emphasis on cross-government collaboration to bring agencies together for coordinated crisis communications. A steering committee of key government agencies met each day for several weeks during the Delta outbreak to discuss community feedback to ensure responsive messaging.

Inquiry participants told us that it's important to maintain the networks that were established during COVID-19 and natural disasters to ensure that this collaborative approach continues.

### **CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need to be involved in crisis preparation and communication**

Whilst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were not explicitly referred to in the scope of this inquiry, some recommendations have been made as certain submissions reflected a clear need to ensure involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations in crisis communications for communities.

CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must be involved in preparing for, and communicating in a crisis situation. We heard that this could be achieved through advisory or steering committees, taskforces and peak bodies where CALD communities can advise on communications and take part in decision-making. While organisations are usually the first to respond to a crisis, we heard that they are often included late in an emergency response and don't have input or recognition in our emergency management system.

Inquiry participants told us that a process to involve the community sector in disaster responses could provide grassroots knowledge and inform local decision making, as well as improve information sharing with local organisations by the Government. It could also enable ongoing relationships and engagement with CALD communities, organisations and leaders, which can make it easier to mobilise and respond quickly when a crisis emerges.

### **More support for CALD community organisations**

Community organisations told us that they received little or no extra funding to support their work for CALD communities during COVID-19, and that they needed to rely on existing resources and staff to meet these additional demands. We have recommended that the NSW Government consults with CALD community organisations on ways it can support the sector to communicate effectively with CALD communities, including through funding and capacity building.

Inquiry participants supported increasing funding and resources for CALD community organisations to respond to crises, and to provide capacity-building and training to deliver messaging. We heard that organisations could be given communications funding or grants to ensure the sector is properly resourced to respond to crises.

The NSW Government recognised the burden of the extra workload during COVID-19 on frontline workers, including community leaders, and arranged social cohesion capacity-building workshops in 2021. We also heard that grants were provided under the Government's Community Resilience Innovation Program for capacity building and other projects for CALD community leaders to communicate crisis and emergency information.

### **Tailored, co-designed crisis communications for CALD communities**

Communication about crises to CALD communities should be tailored to their needs. We heard that listening to local CALD communities is important, as people in different local government areas can have differing needs in crisis situations. Targeted communication can also help to encourage specific behaviours.

Inquiry participants told us that community organisations and leaders must be involved in the design and development of communication strategies for CALD communities. A co-design approach would mean that messaging is culturally appropriate and respects the values of targeted CALD communities. Co-design would help to avoid some of the problems with pandemic-related crisis communications that were raised during the inquiry, including poorly translated material, overly formal language, and the overlooking of smaller and emerging community languages.

The NSW Government agreed that CALD communities should have the opportunity to influence messaging at each stage of a crisis. Community sentiment analysis done during the pandemic is an example of working with community leaders to assess and improve the effectiveness of the Government's crisis messaging.



### **Using a range of formats and channels for crisis messaging**

Crisis communications should be available in a range of formats and provided through different channels so that it can be accessed by different CALD community cohorts. Inquiry participants told us that communication channels should be tailored to each community group and age group. Communications methods and formats should be chosen based on consideration of how different groups prefer to receive information.

Crisis messaging should cater to community members with poor literacy in their native language, and those who lack digital skills. It should meet the needs of young people, as well as older people in the community. We heard that a range of channels and formats are needed to reach different cohorts, including audio-visual resources in clear and simple language, public forums and meetings, culturally appropriate media, and platforms that are appropriate for each community, such as apps and social media.

The NSW Government told us that COVID-19 showed that a multi-faceted, multi-channelled approach is vital to reaching audiences when messaging is time sensitive. During COVID-19, the Government provided information in a number of ways: in person and online in language information sessions; translated fact sheets, posters, videos and social tiles; website content; and frontline customer service communication.

### **A crisis communications strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

We have recommended that the NSW Government works with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to develop a targeted, culturally appropriate crisis communications strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We heard that communications rolled out across Aboriginal communities during COVID-19 were unclear and inappropriately targeted. There was limited targeted communication, even though Aboriginal people were identified as a priority population as they were more vulnerable to serious illness and death. Communication resources that were developed had to be redrafted by Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) to ensure they were culturally appropriate.

ACCHOs play a vital role during crises and the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector is best placed to deliver messaging and crisis communications, as they have the trust of their communities. The NSW Government should engage with the ACCHO sector to develop a tailored crisis communications strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### **Funding for multi-lingual and community media**

Multi-lingual and community media organisations like SBS and the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) provide vital information to CALD communities during crises. Examples of their work during COVID-19 include SBS's live translation of the Premier's daily press conferences in 10 languages, NEMBC's audio Explainers and a news service in multiple languages distributed via radio and social media, and the SBS Coronavirus portal with COVID-19 news and information in over 60 languages.

During a time of declining trust in traditional mainstream media, community and multi-lingual media enjoys relatively high trust and audience recognition and reach. We heard that it's a cost-effective way to reach communities.

The NSW Government recognised the multicultural media sector's importance and provided additional support to media during the pandemic through its Multicultural Media Grants Program. Government advertising spending was also increased, with a higher level of Government advertising directed to CALD and Aboriginal communities during COVID-19.

### **Racism and discrimination increased during the pandemic**

We acknowledge the racism and the various difficulties, including access to accurate health information and media vilification, which were experienced by Chinese Australians, Asian Australians and members of CALD communities in the 12 LGAs of concern.

We heard that the pandemic amplified racism and discrimination towards CALD communities. Racism and discrimination cause trauma and fear and can erode trust in government. This can damage the value of future crisis communications and lead to poorer outcomes for CALD communities.

Some communities felt there was discrimination in the Government's approach to managing COVID-19. We heard inquiry participants refer to perceptions of over-policing of certain CALD communities, and difficulties accessing accurate information. Media vilification of certain CALD community groups was also raised during inquiry.

We heard that the NSW Government is committed to eliminating racism, hate and discrimination, and that this is especially important during crises when tensions and stresses are elevated. The Government activated a response plan to identify, monitor, and share information about racism and hate related to the pandemic. It also focused on engagement to target misinformation, with Multicultural NSW implementing a COVID-19 community engagement strategy that included regular community engagement forums.

We recommend that the NSW Government engages with CALD community organisations and community leaders on strategies to prevent racism during crises. Inquiry participants also supported greater collaboration between state and Federal governments on a unified approach to racism. We note that there is work underway at the Federal level to develop a National Anti-Racism Framework.

We acknowledge the racism and discrimination experienced by members of the CALD community during COVID-19 and the harm it caused. We encourage the NSW Government to work with CALD community groups to develop strategies to combat racism.

## Findings and recommendations

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Finding 1   | 1  |
| CALD community organisations played a key role in communicating with, and supporting local CALD communities during COVID-19.  |    |
| Finding 2   | 5  |
| Collaboration between different levels of government, and CALD community organisations and networks is vital to effective communication with CALD communities during crises.  |    |
| Recommendation 1  | 9  |
| That the NSW Government investigates ways to improve CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community involvement in emergency and crisis preparation and communication, such as through a community advisory taskforce, or membership of local emergency management committees, and continues to encourage diversity in leadership and staff roles in government agencies. |    |
| Recommendation 2  | 13 |
| That the NSW Government consults with CALD community organisations on how it can support the sector to communicate effectively with CALD communities during crises, including through additional funding, consideration of crisis grants, and capacity building.  |    |
| Recommendation 3  | 17 |
| That the NSW Government uses existing CALD community networks to develop and co-design future crisis communications tailored to CALD community groups.  |    |
| Recommendation 4  | 23 |
| That future crisis communications for CALD communities be delivered through a range of channels and formats, including print, video, audio, telephone, social media, and events like public forums.   |    |
| Recommendation 5  | 27 |
| That the NSW Government works with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to develop a targeted, culturally appropriate crisis communications strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.  |    |
| Recommendation 6  | 29 |
| That the NSW Government increases funding for community and multilingual broadcast media, to ensure that broadcasters are adequately resourced to provide crisis information to CALD communities.   |    |
| Finding 3   | 32 |
| There was an increase in racism and discrimination towards CALD communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This caused trauma and fear and had negative health consequences for CALD communities. It also led to a loss of trust in Government by some in the CALD community, which affected crisis communications.  |    |

Recommendation 7 \_\_\_\_\_ 37

That the NSW Government consults with CALD community organisations and community leaders on policies and strategies to prevent racism and discrimination during crises.

Recommendation 8 \_\_\_\_\_ 39

That the NSW Government reviews current pathways for reporting or making complaints of discrimination and racism, with a view to improving these avenues and preventing racism and discrimination in society.

# Chapter One – Recognising and supporting CALD community organisations during crises

## CALD community organisations played a vital role in supporting communities during COVID-19

### Summary

CALD community organisations gave vital support to their communities during COVID-19, providing practical support and conveying health and emergency messages.

### Finding 1

#### **CALD community organisations played a key role in communicating with, and supporting local CALD communities during COVID-19.**

- 1.1 The Committee heard that CALD community organisations and leaders played a crucial role in communicating with, and supporting local CALD communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.2 Inquiry participants told us that community organisations and leaders were a key source of information for CALD communities, as they are well-established, trusted voices who understand language and cultural nuances and have existing relationships with leaders and communities.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, staff of community organisations live and work in their local area and communities.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.3 During the inquiry, we heard that the community sector conveyed health and emergency messages and provided support to CALD communities.<sup>3</sup> Community organisations translated health messages, produced in-language audio and visual information resources and delivered in-language support to communities.<sup>4</sup> Through their work, community organisations maintained community connections for isolated people, which was also important in supporting their

<sup>1</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, p 4; [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, pp 6-7; see also Emeritus Professor Andrew Markus, [Mapping Social Cohesion 2021](#), viewed 9 November 2022, pp 15, 121.

<sup>2</sup> Ms Nemat Kharboutli, Manager, Linking Hearts Service, Muslim Women Australia, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 17; [Submission 18](#), Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, p 1; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 10.

<sup>3</sup> See for example: [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, p 3; [Submission 8](#), Anglicare North Coast, p 1; [Submission 17](#), SydWest Multicultural Services, pp 4, 6; [Submission 23](#), Indian (Sub-Cont) Crisis and Support Agency, p 1; [Submission 28](#), Shayna Humanitarian Services, pp 2-3; Ms Jane Lu, Executive Officer, Chinese Australian Services Society, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 20; Mr Nathan Hagarty, Chair of Board, Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 25; Mr Tim Wark, Manager of Community Partnerships and Population Programs, ACON, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 38; Ms Yamamah Agah, Group Manager Newcomers, Settlement and Integration, Settlement Services International, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 44.

<sup>4</sup> [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Service, pp 3-4; [Submission 21](#), Chinese Australian Services Society, p 2; [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, pp 3-4.

mental health.<sup>5</sup>

- 1.4 Health and emergency messages were distributed to CALD communities through a variety of methods. For example, Settlement Services International established an online community portal where translated and easy-to-understand COVID-19 messaging was available for communities.<sup>6</sup>
- 1.5 SydWest Multicultural Services supported its existing community leaders' forum to engage with, and refine messaging about COVID-19 requirements for CALD communities. It also established a virtual door-knock initiative to communicate with hard-to-reach populations through online information sessions.<sup>7</sup>
- 1.6 The Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW (AHMRC) told us that Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) developed their own communication campaigns and messaging to support Aboriginal communities.<sup>8</sup> We discuss crisis communications tailored to Aboriginal communities in more detail in Chapter 2.
- 1.7 Community organisations communicated with individuals, including seniors and single mothers, through face-to-face meetings and phone calls. During these conversations, staff and case managers spoke to people about COVID-19 rules and where they could access support, as well as providing ongoing support, including checking on peoples' wellbeing and welfare.<sup>9</sup> The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and its member societies also provided spiritual support over the phone and through virtual services.<sup>10</sup>
- 1.8 Community organisations used online tools, including social media and Zoom, to reach communities. Inquiry participants shared examples of their online activities, including children's playgroups, English classes, peer sessions, in-language webinars and recreational activities for seniors.<sup>11</sup> The Chinese Australian Services Society held one-on-one distanced training sessions on how to use technological devices, with face-to-face activity sessions reaching up to 100 participants per session.<sup>12</sup>
- 1.9 We heard that forums and information sessions, including those held online,

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<sup>5</sup> Mr Anthony Pang, Deputy Chairperson/Secretary, Chinese Australian Services Society, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 19; Mr Wark, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, pp 35, 38, 39; [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, pp 2, 4; [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 8; [Submission 8](#), Anglicare North Coast, p 1; Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 8.

<sup>6</sup> [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, p 3; Ms Agah, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 44.

<sup>7</sup> [Submission 17](#), SydWest Multicultural Services, pp 4, 6.

<sup>8</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, p 3.

<sup>9</sup> Mr John Buraho, Settlement Manager, Multicultural Communities, CORE Community Services, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 12; Ms Lu, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 20; [Submission 8](#), Anglicare North Coast, p 1; [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, p 3; [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, pp 2, 4; [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 3.

<sup>10</sup> [Submission 22](#), Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, pp 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, pp 2, 4; [Submission 21](#), Chinese Australian Services Society, p 2; Mr Wark, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 38.

<sup>12</sup> [Submission 21](#), Chinese Australian Services Society, p 2.

helped community organisations to reach more people.<sup>13</sup> Importantly, they provided opportunities for community leaders and health professionals to share and discuss COVID-19 and other health-related information with communities.<sup>14</sup> Participants in these sessions could then share this information with their communities.<sup>15</sup> Mr Nathan Hagarty, Chair of Board, Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, told us that one information session in Western Sydney received 400 or 500 RSVPs, with between 200 to 300 people attending.<sup>16</sup>

- 1.10 We heard that community organisations used their existing programs and support structures to distribute COVID-19 information and provide support to communities.<sup>17</sup> For example, Muslim Women Australia provided case management and housing and disability assistance to a family with complex needs impacted by COVID-19 through its Linking Hearts Service.<sup>18</sup>
- 1.11 Community organisations also mobilised to provide in kind and practical support to communities including grocery shopping and food delivery, frozen meals, care packages and school kits or activity packs for children.<sup>19</sup>
- 1.12 Settlement Services International reflected on the work of community organisations and leaders, stating that they proactively engaged their communities and helped gain support for positive health behaviour, and also addressed health-related misinformation.<sup>20</sup>
- 1.13 The case study below illustrates the support that community groups provided to CALD communities during the pandemic.

#### Case study 1: Anglicare North Coast supported local CALD communities during COVID-19<sup>21</sup>

Anglicare North Coast (ANC) works with refugees and migrants in the Coffs Harbour local government area (LGA). In the last 3 years, the North Coast has experienced many crises including COVID-19, bushfires and floods.

<sup>13</sup> [Submission 18](#), Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, p 5; [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, pp 2, 4; [Submission 23](#), Indian (Sub-Cont) Crisis and Support Agency, p 1; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 9; [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 4; Mr Pang, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 19; Mr Hagarty, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 25; Mr Wark, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 38; Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 3.

<sup>14</sup> [Submission 18](#), Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, p 5; [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, pp 2, 4; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 9; [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 4; Mr Pang, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 19; Mr Hagarty, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 25; Mr Wark, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 38; Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 3.

<sup>15</sup> [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 4; Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 3.

<sup>16</sup> Mr Hagarty, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 25.

<sup>17</sup> [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 3; [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, p 4; Ms Kharboutli, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 14.

<sup>18</sup> Ms Kharboutli, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 14.

<sup>19</sup> Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, pp 3, 12; [Submission 22](#), Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, p 3; [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, p 4; [Submission 28](#), Shayna Humanitarian Services, p 2.

<sup>20</sup> [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, p 3.

<sup>21</sup> [Submission 8](#), Anglicare North Coast, p 1.

ANC identified that CALD communities were isolated and faced multiple barriers to information access and support, including difficulty accessing interpreters, inability to understand English, and limited access to digital technology and devices. To combat this, ANC staff worked with the Translating and Interpreting Service to ensure people had correct information about COVID-19 lockdown regulations. Volunteers created the Multilingual Info Co-Op (MICO), which was supported by the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, Red Cross, and Multicultural Network in Coffs Harbour. Noting that many members of the CALD community were accessing crisis information online, MICO ensured that they were able to access COVID-19 information in various languages via websites and private Facebook groups.

### Cultural diversity in NSW

- 1.14 Delivery of crisis communications to CALD communities by government agencies and community organisations was essential to ensure that NSW's culturally and linguistically diverse population was informed during the pandemic.
- 1.15 In 2021 the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that 29.3 per cent of the NSW population was born overseas and 22.8 percent of the Australian population spoke a language other than English at home. In NSW, more than 215 languages are spoken and over 144 different religions are practised.<sup>22</sup> Western Sydney and South-Western Sydney have large CALD populations and households where a non-English language is spoken at home.<sup>23</sup>
- 1.16 During the pandemic, COVID-19 posed a greater risk to CALD communities. We heard that people born overseas were at greater risk of dying from COVID-19 than those born in Australia, with 6.8 deaths per 100,000 among people born overseas compared to an overall population death rate of 2.3 deaths per 100,000.<sup>24</sup>
- 1.17 The NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) told us that socioeconomic disadvantage was linked with the risk of catching and dying from COVID-19, with Western and South-Western Sydney reporting the highest case numbers and deaths during the Delta and Omicron outbreaks.<sup>25</sup>
- 1.18 In addition, Aboriginal people were identified as a priority population, as they were found to be at greater risk of contracting COVID-19, leading to serious disease and death.<sup>26</sup>

### Limited additional funding for community organisations during COVID-19

- 1.19 Community organisations told us that they received either minimal or no additional funding to support their work for CALD communities during the peak

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<sup>22</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Cultural Diversity of Australia](#), 20 September 2022, viewed 8 November 2022; [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 4.

<sup>23</sup> [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, pp 14-15.

<sup>24</sup> [Submission 18](#), Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, p 2; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, pp 5-6; [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 2.

<sup>25</sup> [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 6.

<sup>26</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, p 3.



periods of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>27</sup> Instead, organisations had to rely on their existing resources and staff to support communities.<sup>28</sup> The AHMRC told us this caused significant strain on ACCHOs.<sup>29</sup>

- 1.20 Mr John Buraho, Settlement Manager, Multicultural Communities, CORE Community Services, told us that CORE Community Services was able to provide additional support to communities as it is a large non-for-profit organisation. He said that smaller organisations with fewer staff, on the other hand, were unable to provide extra support. Nevertheless, CORE's capacity was still stretched as staff had to work overtime and on weekends to meet the additional demand.<sup>30</sup>
- 1.21 The Canterbury-Bankstown Multicultural Interagency suggested that it was unfair to expect small organisations, such as language-specific groups under a lot of pressure, to distribute information 'without support and proper funding'.<sup>31</sup> During the pandemic, some community leaders experienced burnout from the pressure to deliver crisis communications on a long-term volunteer basis, in addition to paid employment.<sup>32</sup> We heard that this 'undervalued their expertise and knowledge'.<sup>33</sup>

## Collaboration between government and CALD community organisations is key to effective crisis communication

### Summary

Collaboration between government and CALD community organisations and networks is an essential part of effective crisis communication.

### Finding 2

**Collaboration between different levels of government, and CALD community organisations and networks is vital to effective communication with CALD communities during crises.**

- 1.22 Throughout the inquiry we heard that collaboration between CALD community organisations and networks, and different levels of government is essential to delivering effective crisis communication to CALD communities.

### Collaboration during the pandemic

- 1.23 During the pandemic, community organisations worked with local and state governments and non-government organisations to convey COVID-19 related

<sup>27</sup> Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 12; [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, p 3.

<sup>28</sup> Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 12; [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, p 3; Ms Randa Kattan, Chief Executive Officer, Arab Council Australia, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 45; Ms Agah, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 46.

<sup>29</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, p 3.

<sup>30</sup> Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 12.

<sup>31</sup> [Submission 31](#), Canterbury-Bankstown Multicultural Interagency, p 1.

<sup>32</sup> [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 4; Ms Agah, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 46.

<sup>33</sup> [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 4.

messages and deliver support to communities.<sup>34</sup>

- 1.24 Mr Buraho told us that collaboration and partnerships between not-for-profit and community organisations, community and religious leaders and Fairfield City Council to deliver direct messaging, significantly contributed to high vaccination rates in Fairfield. Similarly, CORE Community Services and the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre established a COVID-19 taskforce to distribute information to community leaders and members.<sup>35</sup>
- 1.25 Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre's online forum connected community leaders and government entities, such as Liverpool City Council and NSW Police, to bridge the gap between government and CALD communities.<sup>36</sup>
- 1.26 The Western Sydney Local Health District Health Literacy Hub worked with key stakeholder groups to guide communications and test messaging for vulnerable youth, CALD groups and asylum seekers and refugees.<sup>37</sup>
- 1.27 Community organisations and the NSW Government also told us that they used existing networks, partnerships and relationships to respond to crises and provide support and services for communities.<sup>38</sup> ACON used its partnerships with LGBTQI multicultural community groups to reach LGBTQI people from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds.<sup>39</sup>
- 1.28 Community Hubs Australia observed that pre-existing networks should be used to reach individuals who would otherwise be missed. This includes collaboration between community hubs, schools and service providers to reach community groups, as well as isolated families who are not part of a group.<sup>40</sup>
- 1.29 The case study below outlines collaboration between NSW Health and community leaders to set up vaccination spots.

#### **Case study 2: NSW Health collaborates with religious and community leaders on vaccination spots<sup>41</sup>**

NSW Health worked with local religious and cultural communities to establish pop-up vaccination hubs during the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a need to make vaccines more accessible to local communities in culturally safe and familiar places. Religious and community leaders offered their places of worship and community

<sup>34</sup> [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 3; [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, p 1; [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, pp 3-4; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 7; Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 3; Mr Farhad Arian, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, CORE Community Services, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, pp 3-4; Mr Wark, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, pp 35-36.

<sup>35</sup> Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 3.

<sup>36</sup> [Submission 18](#), Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, p 5.

<sup>37</sup> [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, pp 7-8.

<sup>38</sup> Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 12; Ms Kharboutli, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 14; [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 29-30; Mr Joseph La Posta, Chief Executive Officer, Multicultural NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 13.

<sup>39</sup> [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 3.

<sup>40</sup> [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, pp 3-4.

<sup>41</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 10.

centres to NSW Health to establish vaccination pop-up hubs.

The Green Valley Mosque vaccinated 839 people in one day, and its operator, Mr Mohammed Yasin, said that collaboration had helped make the clinic a success.

The clinics were well received by communities, and vaccine pop-up hubs became a key part of the vaccination roll-out in NSW.

### Government strategies to increase collaboration during the pandemic

- 1.30 The NSW Government told us that it emphasised collaboration and community engagement and feedback in its response to COVID-19. This was reflected in its Delta Micro Strategy, which streamlined governance structures to provide more targeted support to Western and South-West Sydney and enable cross-government collaboration. Pillar 5 of the strategy focused 'on empowering community groups to deliver local services and support during the pandemic'.<sup>42</sup>
- 1.31 We heard that the Government worked with prominent community groups, targeted community leaders and media broadcasters to distribute COVID-19 related information, including translated and in-language resources.<sup>43</sup> For example, NSW Health worked with respected community healthcare ambassadors, including GPs and bilingual healthcare workers, to deliver health messages and advice.<sup>44</sup>
- 1.32 The Government also worked with the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) and SBS to produce in-language content and live interpret government press conferences.<sup>45</sup> Community leaders responded to the Government's call to produce in-language social media videos encouraging their communities to get vaccinated.<sup>46</sup>
- 1.33 The Government established the COVID-19 Delta Outbreak Community Sentiment Project to get feedback on the effectiveness of government crisis communications and the impact of the lockdown on communities in Western Sydney.<sup>47</sup> Arab Council Australia said that sentiment collection should form part of future crisis communications.<sup>48</sup> We discuss the sentiment project in Chapter 2.
- 1.34 The Government also conducted community engagement forums where Ministers and government agency representatives provided community groups and leaders, religious groups and multicultural community media organisations with the most up-to-date public health information. Participants had the

<sup>42</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 10.

<sup>43</sup> Mr William Murphy, Deputy Secretary, Customer, Delivery and Transformation, Department of Customer Service, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 13; [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 7-9.

<sup>44</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 9.

<sup>45</sup> Mr Russell Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council and Chief News Director, Multilingual News Service, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 7; Ms Amanda Stephinson, Director, Public Health (COVID-19) Communications, NSW Ministry of Health, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 13; Mr Murphy, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, pp 13-14; Mr La Posta, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 16.

<sup>46</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 7-9; Dr Kerry Chant, Deputy Secretary, Population and Public Health, and Chief Health Officer, NSW Health, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 13.

<sup>47</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 11-12; Mr La Posta, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 21.

<sup>48</sup> [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, p 5.

opportunity to ask questions and clarify misinformation.<sup>49</sup>

- 1.35 The Government's COVID-19 response emphasised cross-government collaboration, bringing agencies together to deliver coordinated crisis communications. The Pillar 5 Steering Committee, led by Multicultural NSW (MNSW) and the Department of Customer Service-led Communications Group, met daily for several weeks during the Delta outbreak to share community feedback and ensure responsive messaging.<sup>50</sup> The Government is continuing this practice in response to community concerns about other crises, including floods.<sup>51</sup>
- 1.36 We heard that it is important to maintain the networks established during the COVID-19 crisis and natural disasters.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, there is a need to review what worked well during the pandemic and to continue those practices and programs.<sup>53</sup>
- 1.37 The case study below highlights effective collaboration between Government agencies and religious and community groups during COVID-19.

### Case study 3: Agencies working with religious and community groups during COVID-19<sup>54</sup>

Forums played a large role in communicating with CALD communities during COVID-19. MNSW partnered with key agencies to facilitate a number of community forums. 176 forums were held with community groups and religious leaders.

The Department of Customer Service worked with well-established, prominent community and faith groups to distribute crisis communications. The groups were engaged to distribute resources and information across their networks. Resources included toolkits for holding COVID-19 safe religious and holiday gatherings and self-isolation requirements.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) held capacity building workshops for faith and cultural groups during COVID-19. DCJ supported the Islamic Council of NSW to help design and facilitate a community forum with close to 100 members, creating channels to bring their community together and capturing experiences, learnings, and impacts of lockdowns.

MNSW used existing connections with religious leaders via the Religious Communities Forum. The Forum acted as a critical reference point for MNSW on the implications of Public Health Orders on places of worship and religious communities.

- 1.38 Despite best intentions, there were some unintended consequences in how the Government's targeted COVID-19 strategies were received by communities in the 12 LGAs of concern. The quotes below represent examples of these unintended

<sup>49</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 13-14; Mr Murphy, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 15.

<sup>50</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 33-34; Mr Murphy, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 12; Ms Stephinson, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 13.

<sup>51</sup> Mr Murphy, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 12.

<sup>52</sup> Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 6.

<sup>53</sup> Mr Anderson, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 8.

<sup>54</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 8, 12, 14, 29, 30.

consequences.

I think just based on our experience late last year of what happened, the restrictions, the way they occurred, the consistent restrictions, really created a massive breakdown in trust, if you like. Particularly when it came to particular areas like Bankstown, Lakemba, places like that, where it's clear they are all besieged areas. They've had the law-and-order approach for so many decades. Historically, it's been like that for a long time, so they're quite easy to pick on.

Having the police on the ground, having the police part of the press conference, if you like, having the boots on the ground in terms of the army, although they were knocking on doors and helping people, that's not what people see. People do see that it's extremely – very much it's discriminatory and it's racist.<sup>55</sup>

Going back to the point of having that very negative terminology or sending the police and defence force to police the community, not just their presence but what we were hearing on the ground was also their attitude and behaviour as well, really triggered a lot of trauma and didn't help getting the community together.<sup>56</sup>

It certainly feels over the last 10 or so years that, with things like the airport, Western Sydney University and a whole bunch of other institutions, we were moving on from that stigma. But with a couple of very quick decisions by the Government and the way it was spun by the media, again there was the tale of two Sydneys. We're back where we started from, trying to overcome this stigma of what it is to be a westie and all the connotations associated with it.<sup>57</sup>

- 1.39 These examples illustrate the importance of trust. They also highlight the impacts of breaches of trust between authorities and CALD communities, including potentially undermining the effectiveness of the Government's strategies.

## **Increasing CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community involvement in crisis preparation and communication**

### **Summary**

The NSW Government should consider ways to increase the involvement of CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in crisis communication and preparation.

### **Recommendation 1**

**That the NSW Government investigates ways to improve CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community involvement in emergency and crisis preparation and communication, such as through a community advisory taskforce, or membership of local emergency management committees, and continues to encourage diversity in leadership and staff roles in government agencies.**

- 1.40 We heard that CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must be involved in preparing for, and communicating, in an emergency or crisis. This

<sup>55</sup> Ms Kattan, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 47.

<sup>56</sup> Ms Pan, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 27.

<sup>57</sup> Mr Hagarty, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 31.

includes through advisory or steering committees, taskforces and peak bodies where CALD communities can advise on communications and participate in the decision-making process.

- 1.41 While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were not the focus of this inquiry, it is recognised that this is a particularly targeted community and henceforth has been included in the report.

#### **Limited community involvement in crisis planning and communication**

- 1.42 The NSW Government outlined the framework for communications with the public in coordinating emergency management. The *Multicultural Act NSW 2000* and the Multicultural Principles recognise the cultural and linguistic diversity in the population and aim to ensure that all individuals have equal and fair access to Government programs and activities.<sup>58</sup> In a declared emergency, the NSW State Emergency Management Plan is implemented to determine the roles and responsibilities of government agencies, including how they coordinate the providing of public information.<sup>59</sup>
- 1.43 Inquiry participants reflected on their involvement in emergencies and crises. NCOSS noted that non-government organisations are acknowledged as critical contributors to disaster resilience in Australia in the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*. However, although social service organisations are often the first to respond to a crisis and go beyond their obligations, they are often included late in an emergency response and don't have input or formal recognition in the emergency management system.<sup>60</sup>
- 1.44 Ms Eleanor Harris, NCOSS's Acting Manager, Building Resilience for Emergency Responses, told us that a current NCOSS project is analysing the community sector's involvement in emergency responses. The project has found that local services are involved in the early emergency response or long-term recovery, and that case management and normal services increase in number and complexity during emergencies and crises. It also observed that the community sector receives ad hoc funding and that its involvement is not well documented.<sup>61</sup>
- 1.45 We heard that, during the pandemic, there was ad-hoc involvement of community organisations in the disaster response and crisis communications.<sup>62</sup> Ms Harris observed that it was difficult for community groups to provide feedback to the Government about disaster and emergency management.<sup>63</sup>
- 1.46 The Local Government Multicultural Network said that there was 'no authentic pathway established to provide community representation through advisory committees' and that community representatives felt excluded from the

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<sup>58</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 5.

<sup>59</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 5-6.

<sup>60</sup> NCOSS submission to Independent Flood Inquiry cited in [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, p 4.

<sup>61</sup> Ms Eleanor Harris, Acting Manager, Building Resilience for Emergency Responses, NSW Council of Social Service, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, pp 12-13.

<sup>62</sup> [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 2; Ms Harris, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 13.

<sup>63</sup> Ms Harris, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 12.

decision-making table with certain voices handpicked by government.<sup>64</sup>

- 1.47 CORE Community Services observed that collaboration between CALD communities on the communication challenges and needs of communities was impacted by the lack of 'an inclusive NSW state-wide CALD engagement peak body for multicultural health and communication issues'.<sup>65</sup>

### Ways to improve community involvement

- 1.48 We support the involvement of CALD communities in emergency and crisis preparation and communication. We heard that we need to proactively plan for crises rather than react to them. Inquiry participants called for a formalised process to involve the community sector in disaster responses to provide grassroots knowledge and inform local decision making.<sup>66</sup>
- 1.49 This includes the need for a co-design approach between governments and CALD communities.<sup>67</sup> This is further discussed in chapter 2 of this report.
- 1.50 Inquiry participants emphasised that community organisations and leaders must be engaged from the beginning of a crisis.<sup>68</sup>
- 1.51 They also discussed the importance of ongoing, long-term relationships and engagement with CALD communities, organisations and leaders.<sup>69</sup> This must involve identifying the key and most appropriate stakeholders, organisations, leaders and representatives in communities prior to a crisis occurring so that they can be mobilised quickly when needed.<sup>70</sup> We heard that ongoing relationships actively build community resilience and trust among CALD communities.<sup>71</sup>
- 1.52 Ms Jane Lu, Executive Officer, Chinese Australian Services Society Limited, suggested organising roundtable meetings to identify and maintain relationships with community organisations and identify service gaps. She said that this should

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<sup>64</sup> [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, p 3.

<sup>65</sup> [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 3.

<sup>66</sup> Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 11; Ms Harris, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, pp 13-15; Ms Kharboutli, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 13.

<sup>67</sup> [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, p 6; [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 2; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 11.

<sup>68</sup> [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, p 5; [Submission 9](#), Multicultural Education team, Education Standards, NSW Department of Education, p 1; [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, p 2; Ms Kattan, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 45.

<sup>69</sup> Ms Harris, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 15; Ms Lucy Watson, Policy and Development Officer, ACON [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 36; [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 2; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 4; [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 3.

<sup>70</sup> [Submission 12](#), Carers NSW, p 3; [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, p 5; [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 2; [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, p 7; Ms Selina Lee, Marketing & Communications Manager, SydWest Multicultural Services, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 11; [Submission 7](#), Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, pp 6-7; Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 11; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 11; Distinguished Professor Macnamara, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, pp 2-3.

<sup>71</sup> [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 2; [Submission 12](#), Carers NSW, p 3.

be continued by MNSW and DCJ after the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>72</sup>

- 1.53 Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara said that 'a kilogram of prevention is worth a tonne of cure'. He emphasised that having open lines of communication and established trust is particularly important for CALD communities, who are 'often among the least accessible and hardest to reach sections of society'.<sup>73</sup>
- 1.54 The AHMRC told us that government agencies should improve their information-sharing with local organisations and that this should be reflected in the NSW State Emergency Management Plan. It observed that there was poor coordination within the Government in relation to information sharing with local organisations during the pandemic and recent floods, and suggested that local organisations should be involved in governance structures such as Local Emergency Management Committees to receive information to share with their communities.<sup>74</sup>
- 1.55 Inquiry participants suggested various ways to better involve CALD communities in crisis planning, including:
- Conducting community engagement through advisory committees with community representatives.<sup>75</sup>
  - Establishing a CALD steering committee for each area with representation from local CALD communities to advise on appropriate crisis communications, how to disseminate information and who to engage with.<sup>76</sup>
  - Establishing an expert panel of community leaders to collaborate with government during a public health crisis to distribute reliable, accurate and timely information, including translated information.<sup>77</sup>
  - During a crisis, establishing a taskforce with representatives from CALD organisations to participate in the decision-making process, along with government agencies and elected representatives with large constituencies from CALD communities.<sup>78</sup>
  - Ensuring that local CALD community groups and NGOs are represented on 'regional and state-wide emergency management, planning and related committees'.<sup>79</sup>
  - Establishing multicultural communications units in relevant government departments or ministries, to maintain relationships with CALD communities and leaders and develop and implement CALD-specific communication

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<sup>72</sup> Ms Lu, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 20.

<sup>73</sup> [Submission 7](#), Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, pp 6-7.

<sup>74</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, p 4.

<sup>75</sup> [Submission 7](#), Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, p 10.

<sup>76</sup> [Submission 14](#), Asian Australian Alliance, p 1; Ms Erin Wen Ai Chew, National Convener and Co-Founder, Asian Australian Alliance, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 18.

<sup>77</sup> [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 9.

<sup>78</sup> [Submission 17](#), SydWest Multicultural Services, pp 4, 8.

<sup>79</sup> [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, pp 4, 11.



strategies.<sup>80</sup>

### Diversity in leadership and staff

- 1.56 Inquiry participants highlighted the importance of diverse representation on steering committees and reference groups as well as in government, the media and organisations.<sup>81</sup>
- 1.57 Dr Kerry Chant, Deputy Secretary, Population and Public Health, and Chief Health Officer, NSW Health, told us that diversity strengthens the workplace and contributes to good policymaking, and that spokespeople from diverse communities were drawn upon to enhance the Government's COVID-19 response. She noted that the benefits of having a more diverse leadership in the workplace was a key lesson from the pandemic.<sup>82</sup>
- 1.58 The Local Government Multicultural Network said that the makeup of leadership and staff within government agencies and media outlets should reflect the community's diversity.<sup>83</sup> Ms Türkan Aksoy, Secretary, Local Government Multicultural Network, told us that the Government should diversify recruitment pathways for committees and reference groups and ensure that diverse individuals feel safe to speak up.<sup>84</sup>
- 1.59 The Fire Brigade Employee's Union recommended that Fire Rescue NSW (FRNSW) establish a Multicultural Liaison Officer to conduct CALD community engagement and design and implement CALD community specific communication and engagement strategies. It recommended that qualified CALD community members be employed by FRNSW.<sup>85</sup>

## Supporting CALD community organisations to communicate with their communities

### Summary

The NSW Government should consult CALD community organisations on how to support the sector to communicate effectively with CALD communities during crises.

### Recommendation 2

**That the NSW Government consults with CALD community organisations on how it can support the sector to communicate effectively with CALD communities during crises, including through additional funding, consideration of crisis grants, and capacity building.**

<sup>80</sup> [Submission 1](#), Mr Fulin Yan, p 7.

<sup>81</sup> Ms Türkan Aksoy, Secretary, Local Government Multicultural Network, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 44; [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, p 6; [Submission 19](#), Fire Brigade Employees' Union, pp 4-5; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 12; Dr Chant, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 14.

<sup>82</sup> Dr Chant, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, pp 14-15.

<sup>83</sup> [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, p 6.

<sup>84</sup> Ms Aksoy, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 44.

<sup>85</sup> [Submission 19](#), Fire Brigade Employees' Union, pp 4-5.

- 1.60 We recommend that the NSW Government consults with CALD community organisations on how it can support the sector to communicate effectively with CALD communities during crises. This includes through funding and capacity building.

#### **Additional funding**

- 1.61 During the pandemic, some community organisations received funding to provide support to CALD communities.<sup>86</sup> However, Arab Council Australia observed that this funding was short-term, required a written application and was provided at the end of the Delta outbreak when restrictions were lifting.<sup>87</sup>
- 1.62 ACON told us that it received two funding grants from MNSW, however the \$10,000 funding was ad-hoc and provided with short notice. It also required ACON to use 'almost 300 hours of in-kind staff time, as well as room hire and lunch for our volunteers, totalling more than \$17,000 of in-kind support' as the funding does not permit staff remuneration.<sup>88</sup>
- 1.63 Inquiry participants supported greater funding and resources for CALD community organisations to respond to crises including for crisis communications, support and services for CALD communities.<sup>89</sup> AHMRC recommended that the Government provides communications funding to the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations sector to ensure it has adequate resourcing to respond to crises.<sup>90</sup> The Chinese Community Council of Australia (Victorian Chapter) also suggested introducing and expanding grants and opportunities to ensure sustainability of CALD organisations' operation and the development of community leaders.<sup>91</sup>
- 1.64 We heard that funding and resources could be used for social media training, to, for example, assist smaller organisations to employ a worker to conduct community cohesion support, develop the skills of community leaders and organisations, and ensure the sustainable operation of community organisations.<sup>92</sup>
- 1.65 The Chinese Australian Services Society said that funding could also be provided to organisations with established distribution platforms to extend their ability to

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<sup>86</sup> [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, p 3; [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 3; Ms Kattan, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 45.

<sup>87</sup> [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, pp 3, 6.

<sup>88</sup> [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 3.

<sup>89</sup> [Submission 1](#), Mr Fulin Yan, p 7; [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, p 5; [Submission 9](#), Multicultural Education team, Education Standards, NSW Department of Education, p 1; [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, pp 6-7; [Submission 13](#), Chinese Community Council of Australia (Victorian Chapter), p 2; [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 5; [Submission 21](#), Chinese Australian Services Society, p 3; [Submission 31](#), Canterbury-Bankstown Multicultural Interagency, p 2; [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, p 6; Ms Kattan, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 45; Ms Aksoy, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 45.

<sup>90</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, p 5.

<sup>91</sup> [Submission 13](#), Chinese Community Council of Australia (Victorian Chapter), p 2.

<sup>92</sup> [Submission 31](#), Canterbury-Bankstown Multicultural Interagency, p 2; [Submission 13](#), Chinese Community Council of Australia (Victorian Chapter), p 2; [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 5.

distribute information.<sup>93</sup>

- 1.66 Arab Council Australia said that a crisis management plan should allow funding to be immediately provided at the start of a crisis to trusted CALD organisations that have existing relationships with government. This will ensure that organisations do not have to compete for funds and direct resources to application writing, and can instead focus on supporting communities.<sup>94</sup>

### Capacity building

- 1.67 Recognising the emotional and physical toll of the additional workload on frontline workers, including community leaders, during the COVID-19 lockdowns, the NSW Government delivered social cohesion capacity-building workshops in the second half of 2021. Led by DCJ, 35 online workshops were held for leaders in the 12 LGAs of concern to give them practical skills and education on how to deliver strategic communications and respond to collective trauma.<sup>95</sup>
- 1.68 Inquiry participants told us that community leaders and bi-cultural facilitators should receive ongoing support and compensation to reduce burnout as they take on an additional workload in distributing communications during a crisis.<sup>96</sup>
- 1.69 Ms Aksoy observed that organisations relaying COVID-19 related information (for example, about restrictions) experienced negative messages and backlash on social media. Therefore, these organisations require capacity-building training to safeguard themselves so that they can continue delivering messaging.<sup>97</sup>
- 1.70 In addition, the Indian (Sub-Cont) Crisis and Support Agency suggested capacity building for large networks to their build knowledge or connect with organisations with existing skills and knowledge.<sup>98</sup>
- 1.71 The case study below outlines a capacity building program run by SSI under the Government's Community Resilience Innovation Program.

#### Case study 4: Building capacity of CALD community leaders<sup>99</sup>

Settlement Services International (SSI) is a community-based organisation that supports CALD communities through advocacy and representation.

SSI was given a grant under the Government's Community Resilience Innovation Program to communicate information about emergency readiness to CALD communities. The project used a community leadership model to provide information to CALD communities in their own language in a culturally appropriate way.

<sup>93</sup> [Submission 21](#), Chinese Australian Services Society, p 3.

<sup>94</sup> [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, p 6.

<sup>95</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 35-36.

<sup>96</sup> [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, pp 2-3; [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 7.

<sup>97</sup> Ms Aksoy, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, pp 45-46.

<sup>98</sup> [Submission 23](#), Indian (Sub-Cont) Crisis and Support Agency, p 2.

<sup>99</sup> [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, pp 5-6.

SSI partnered with emergency services to provide messages to CALD communities about local hazard risk and emergency preparedness. The project also aimed to educate community leaders and SES volunteers about the extra support people with disabilities from CALD communities need in an emergency.

Focusing on individuals, their families and their carers, the project used the seven most common languages across from the Blacktown, Hawkesbury, Nepean, Blue Mountains and the Hills areas.

The project paid CALD community leaders to attend workshops and conduct disaster preparedness sessions in their communities. Sessions were taught in an informal way and included videos, web links to emergency services information in multiple languages, and pictures. Participants were encouraged to hold sessions with emergency service personnel who have experience in delivering this information.

Feedback from CALD community leaders indicated that SSI's involvement helped them understand and prepare for emergencies and use this information to teach others.

## Chapter Two – Improving channels of communication with CALD communities during crises

### Community groups and networks to co-design tailored crisis communications

#### Summary

CALD community organisations can co-design culturally appropriate crisis communications that are tailored to their communities' needs.

#### Recommendation 3

**That the NSW Government uses existing CALD community networks to develop and co-design future crisis communications tailored to CALD community groups.**

- 2.1 Community groups can play a key part in developing and delivering targeted crisis communications to CALD communities.
- 2.2 We heard that communications about crises to CALD communities should be tailored rather than using a one-size fits all approach.<sup>100</sup> Settlement Services International said that tailored approaches are particularly important to reaching older people and those who have recently arrived in Australia.<sup>101</sup>
- 2.3 CORE Community Services told us that during the pandemic, having a 'local lens' on the social, cultural, economic and geographic context of each area was vital to ensuring that CALD communities could access public health information and resources that were tailored to their needs. Listening to local CALD communities was important as the needs of people in different LGAs can vary in crisis situations.<sup>102</sup>
- 2.4 The NSW Government said that tailored messaging is especially important when trying to encourage specific behaviours. We heard that NSW Health used targeted communications to encourage vaccination uptakes during COVID-19. An example of this was the bespoke resources NSW Health developed for Pasifika communities, due to the fact that the community had a high number of cases and hospitalisations due to low vaccination rates.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Mr Tim Wark, Manager of Community Partnerships and Population Programs, ACON, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 37; Ms Yamamah Agah, Group Manager Newcomers, Settlement and Integration, Settlement Services International, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 47.

<sup>101</sup> [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, p 2.

<sup>102</sup> [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 7.

<sup>103</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 23.

**Co-designing communications with CALD communities**

- 2.5 Inquiry participants highlighted the need to involve community organisations and leaders in the design and development of communication strategies for CALD communities.<sup>104</sup>
- 2.6 Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara told us that a co-design and user-centred approach is relevant and important to planning, implementing, and evaluating communication with CALD communities. This approach involves 'high levels of community engagement, both directly and working with community leaders and relevant intermediaries, rather than 'at a distance' mediated communication'.<sup>105</sup>
- 2.7 ACON recommended that the NSW Government partners with community groups to review its approach to resources in languages other than English. This review should include consultation on how best to bring groups together to co-design and disseminate resources via trusted community sources, and set up co-design mechanisms for community groups to review and give feedback on government resources and operations.<sup>106</sup>
- 2.8 CORE Community Services said that local non-government organisations that have established relationships with CALD communities should be involved in the design, distribution and evaluation of public health information, to ensure it is 'culturally appropriate and produced in a way that respects cultural values of targeted CALD communities'.<sup>107</sup>
- 2.9 Distinguished Professor Macnamara cited research showing that communication with CALD groups needs to be collaborative, including co-design and co-production. The experiences of local communities and their cultural understanding will 'bring insights to planning and implementation that are not readily attainable by outside 'experts''. He also noted that the collective attitudes of many CALD communities mean that they are community minded and expect to participate in issues that affect their communities.<sup>108</sup>
- 2.10 NCOSS supported early, direct engagement with CALD community organisations and groups in developing and rolling out crisis and public health messaging. This should include co-design processes to identify strategies that align with 'collectivist values harnessed by CALD communities, inclusive of individual, family based and inter-generational responses'.<sup>109</sup>
- 2.11 Engaging with CALD communities to develop crisis communication strategies could help overcome some of the issues that inquiry participants raised in

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<sup>104</sup> [Submission 18](#), Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, p 5; [Submission 7](#), Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, pp 13-14; [Submission 9](#), Multicultural Education team, Educational Standards, NSW Department of Education, p 1; [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, p 2; [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, pp 5, 6.

<sup>105</sup> [Submission 7](#), Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, p 14.

<sup>106</sup> [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 5.

<sup>107</sup> [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 9.

<sup>108</sup> [Submission 7](#), Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, p 18; Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 3.

<sup>109</sup> [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 11.

relation to crisis communication during COVID-19, which included:

- Insufficient, delayed translation and in some cases poorly or inaccurately translated material.<sup>110</sup>
- The need for nuanced, culturally appropriate language in crisis messaging. For example, terms like 'take up arms' and 'get your jabs' do not translate well into Arabic.<sup>111</sup>
- Out of date and inconsistent information from State and Federal government.<sup>112</sup>
- The need for source documents in simple and plain English messaging that is easily understood.<sup>113</sup>
- Translations not being done by native speakers who are fluent in spoken language.<sup>114</sup>
- The need for translated material to be in plain language that is easy to understand, with images, videos and audio voice recordings.<sup>115</sup>
- The need for translations to be available in more languages, including smaller and emerging community languages.<sup>116</sup>
- The need to use culturally sensitive material that includes and represents individuals and communities from CALD backgrounds.<sup>117</sup>

2.12 Some stakeholders told us that the Government's crisis communications improved during the pandemic. For example, the Arab Council Australia said that multilingual material was more readily available towards the end of the period of restrictions, and MNSW stepped up its engagement with CALD communities by actively seeking their views.<sup>118</sup>

2.13 The case study below outlines a program that used community networks and leaders to co-design COVID-19 relief efforts.

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<sup>110</sup> [Submission 18](#), Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, pp 2-3; [Submission 5](#), ACON, pp 2, 4; [Submission 7](#), Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, p 9; [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, p 3; [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 6; [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 26-27; Ms Selina Lee, Marketing & Communications Manager, SydWest Multicultural Services, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 5.

<sup>111</sup> Mr Hagarty, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 27.

<sup>112</sup> Mr John Buraho, Settlement Manager, Multicultural Communities, CORE Community Services, and Mr Farhad Arian, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, CORE Community Services, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 4.

<sup>113</sup> [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, pp 6-7; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 9; [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 30.

<sup>114</sup> [Submission 7](#), Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, p 9.

<sup>115</sup> [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, p 3; [Submission 18](#), Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, p 5.

<sup>116</sup> [Submission 18](#), Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, pp 3, 5; Mr Arian, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 10.

<sup>117</sup> [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 7.

<sup>118</sup> [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, p 3; [Submission 12](#), Carers NSW, p 2; [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, pp 2, 3.

**Case study 5: Multicultural NSW Community Connectors program**<sup>119</sup>

MNSW created the Community Connectors Program in response to the Sentiment Collection Analysis project indicating the need for better support for community networks and leaders.

The program focused on working with community leaders to create local solutions to local issues for their communities, through a co-designed framework. A network of grant recipients in 12 LGAs shared strategies across cultural, religious and linguistic communities.

The program gave community groups a voice in the design and delivery of COVID-19 relief efforts. It created new collaborations across different CALD communities who were experiencing similar issues. It also created new links between CALD organisations and food and welfare relief providers. The program gave grant recipients peer to peer level support and strong networks to help their communities.

**CALD communities can help to develop effective crisis communications**

- 2.14 We heard that asking CALD communities about how to reach their communities is the best way to develop effective messaging. Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara told us about his work on a campaign to improve breast screening rates for women in the Indian and Sri Lankan community. The community was asked for input into the campaign, and the resulting Pink Sari campaign lifted mammograms by 15 per cent against a target of 5 per cent and won four international awards.<sup>120</sup>
- 2.15 Inquiry participants said that community groups can provide peer review of translated material to ensure it is culturally appropriate.<sup>121</sup> They can also identify gaps and nuances in crisis information. For example, Ms April Pan told us that the Rohingya language is not in a written script, and the Rohingya community in the Canterbury-Bankstown area relies on information from community members and authority figures like medical practitioners. Ms Pan said that during the pandemic, her organisation arranged a community forum and invited five Rohingya medical practitioners to convey information to the community.<sup>122</sup>
- 2.16 Dr Archana Voola observed that Serbian is one of the top five languages other than English spoken in the Liverpool LGA. Community leaders gave feedback that COVID-19-related information in the Serbian language was in Cyrillic script, but the Serbian community in south-west Sydney and Liverpool use the Latin-based Croatian or Bosnian script.<sup>123</sup>
- 2.17 The NSW Government said that it's important that CALD communities are given

<sup>119</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 26.

<sup>120</sup> Distinguished Professor Macnamara, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, pp 2, 4.

<sup>121</sup> Ms Lucy Watson, Policy and Development Officer, ACON and Mr Wark, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, pp 36, 37.

<sup>122</sup> Ms April Pan, Co-convenor, Canterbury-Bankstown Multicultural Interagency, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 26.

<sup>123</sup> Dr Archana Voola, Policy Officer, Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 26.



an opportunity to influence messaging at every stage of a public health crisis. They noted that mechanisms for feedback, revision and collaboration must be included in the preparation, response, and evaluation of messaging, to mitigate the risk of misinterpreting the needs of vulnerable communities.<sup>124</sup>

- 2.18 The case study below describes the use of community sentiment analysis to gauge the effectiveness of the Government's crisis messaging.

**Case study 6: COVID-19 Delta outbreak community sentiment project<sup>125</sup>**

MNSW used a community sentiment analysis project to better understand the effectiveness of NSW Government messaging. The project involved conducting regular qualitative interviews with over 250 community leaders in 12 LGAs of concern. MNSW used information from these interviews to help address issues and problems faced by CALD communities during the COVID-19 Delta outbreak.

For example, a Bengali community leader advised that they were required to translate government information from multiple sources into Kurukh, as government information had only been translated into Hindi. Hindi translations often took on different meanings within the Kurukh community, causing miscommunication and confusion.

This feedback assisted agencies with providing information to CALD communities that was delivered in the appropriate tone, dialect and nuance.

**Community organisations are vital to distributing information**

- 2.19 We heard that CALD community organisations play a key role in distributing information to their communities.<sup>126</sup> The Chinese Australian Services Society told us that CALD organisations with a reliable reputation, solid membership base and strong community networks can support the Government by distributing and directly communicating information to people in the community, ensuring equal access to information.<sup>127</sup>
- 2.20 ACON observed that community groups are 'an essential component of effective crisis communication because they are trusted within the communities they serve, and understand the social and cultural specificities that they operate within'.<sup>128</sup>
- 2.21 We heard that CALD communities prefer to receive crisis communications from trusted local community groups. Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre surveyed 155 families in south-west Sydney at the start of lockdown to understand where CALD communities prefer to get health communications from. Around 24 per cent of responses referred to local community organisations as being the best source of COVID-19-related information, the second choice being

<sup>124</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 24.

<sup>125</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 11, 27.

<sup>126</sup> [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, pp 2, 5; [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, p 2.

<sup>127</sup> [Submission 21](#), Chinese Australian Services Society, p 2.

<sup>128</sup> [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 2.

local general practitioners at 23 per cent.<sup>129</sup>

2.22 In addition to community organisations, we heard that trusted community leaders, like doctors and religious leaders, are an important and effective vehicle through which to communicate crisis information to CALD communities.<sup>130</sup>

2.23 Community-based CALD services can also communicate crisis messaging through their work on community programs such as in-home care services, disability services, and youth and settlement services. We heard that these service providers have the rapport, connection and linguistic and cultural understanding to convey crisis information effectively.<sup>131</sup>

### **Government engagement with CALD community groups and networks during COVID-19**

2.24 We heard that the governance structure set up during the Delta outbreak 'allowed the NSW Government to work closely with community leaders and non-government organisations to deliver crisis communications aimed at promoting awareness about Public Health Orders, government restrictions and access to cross-sector supports'.<sup>132</sup>

2.25 The NSW Government engaged community leaders and ambassadors to reach CALD communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was effective when delivering vital messaging, including the benefits and importance of getting vaccinated.<sup>133</sup>

2.26 Communication with community leaders and community sentiment analysis also enabled Multicultural NSW (MNSW) and other government agencies 'to identify gaps in language support, including issues with translations and the availability of information in minority languages'.<sup>134</sup>

2.27 The NSW Government submission stated that community liaison officers in frontline services provided vital language support to CALD communities. NSW Health Workers and Police Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) are often bi-cultural and bilingual, and are integral to crisis communications. The NSW Government said CLOs often act as intermediaries between frontline professionals and the public, they build trust with communities, they deliver information in culturally appropriate ways, they mediate conflict, and they arrange additional language support.<sup>135</sup>

2.28 The NSW Government told us that it responded to the needs of CALD

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<sup>129</sup> [Submission 18](#), Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, p 3.

<sup>130</sup> [Submission 17](#), SydWest Multicultural Services, p 4; [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, pp 2, 3, 4; Ms Pan, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 27; [Submission 12](#), Carers NSW, p 3; [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 4.

<sup>131</sup> [Submission 17](#), SydWest Multicultural Services, pp 5-6; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, pp 7, 10; Ms Nemat Kharboutli, Manager, Linking Hearts Service, Muslim Women Australia, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 17; Ms Jane Lu, Executive Officer, Chinese Australian Services Society, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 20; Ms Agah, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 43.

<sup>132</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 10.

<sup>133</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 9.

<sup>134</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 15.

<sup>135</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 16.

communities through additional investment in translation services. A case study outlining the COVID-19 specific translation fund is below.

#### Case study 7: COVID-19 specific translation fund<sup>136</sup>

Community sentiment analysis by MNSW showed that some community groups felt information about changing restrictions and public health orders was available in more common languages, but that their dialects weren't represented.

In response, a COVID-19 specific translation fund was created to streamline translation and interpreting. The fund aimed to support a holistic and inclusive approach to communications, reaching all members of communities at the same time regardless of linguistic background. Using the funding, from March 2020 to December 2021, MNSW conducted:

- Over 32,000 face-to-face interpreting assignments in 123 languages/dialects.
- Over 22,800 interpreting assignments in 92 languages/dialects by interpreters with National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters credentials.
- Live interpreting of COVID-19 press conferences in 10 languages, in partnership with SBS.

The translation fund enabled MNSW to provide in-language resources to communities in a timely way in a period when accurate and quick messaging was critical. Having specific funding for language services removed concerns of financial coverage, resulting in faster delivery of translation and interpreting services, which ensured vital resources were accessible for all.

## Crisis communications delivered through a range of channels

### Summary

Crisis communications should be available in a range of formats and channels, including print, video and audio, social media platforms and public forums. This will mean that communications can reach different cohorts in CALD communities.

### Recommendation 4

**That future crisis communications for CALD communities be delivered through a range of channels and formats, including print, video, audio, telephone, social media, and events like public forums.**

- 2.29 Crisis communications should be available in a wide range of channels, to ensure that it can be accessed by different CALD community cohorts.
- 2.30 Inquiry participants told us that channels of communication should be tailored to all community groups and age groups. A range of channels and formats are needed to reach different cohorts, including:
- Audio-visual resources, including in clear and simple language, for people

<sup>136</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 22.

who aren't literate in their language.<sup>137</sup>

- Culturally appropriate media including radio, newspapers and social media platforms.<sup>138</sup>
- SMS and email content.<sup>139</sup>
- Print, radio and TV media.<sup>140</sup>
- Public forums, town hall meetings and consultations.<sup>141</sup>
- Channels that are appropriate for each community. For example, the Chinese community relies on WeChat while other communities prefer other apps and social media.<sup>142</sup>
- Multi-tiered communications, such as broad-based national campaigns alongside specialist messaging catering to particular CALD cohorts.<sup>143</sup>
- CALD specific media and community leaders and groups with established relationships of trust in the community. The messenger is important as well as the message itself.<sup>144</sup>

2.31 Inquiry participants supported a range of communication methods that consider how different CALD community groups will receive information. This includes catering to community members with poor literacy in their native language, and those who lack digital communication skills.<sup>145</sup> We also heard that some households can find it difficult to access and use digital devices and technology, for example, when there is only one device available for a family that also uses it

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<sup>137</sup> [Submission 28](#), Shayna Humanitarian Services, pp 5, 6; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, pp 9, 11; [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, p 2; [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 4; [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 7; Ms Erin Wen Ai Chew, National Convener and Co-Founder, Asian Australian Alliance, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 23; Ms Pan, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 25.

<sup>138</sup> [Submission 7](#), Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, p 18; [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, p 2; [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, p 6; [Submission 28](#), Shayna Humanitarian Services, p 5; [Submission 1](#), Mr Fulin Yan, p 7; [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 9; [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 5.

<sup>139</sup> [Submission 28](#), Shayna Humanitarian Services, p 6; [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, p 5.

<sup>140</sup> [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, p 2.

<sup>141</sup> [Submission 7](#), Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, pp 8, 17; [Submission 9](#), Multicultural Education team, Educational Standards, NSW Department of Education, p 1; [Submission 15](#), CORE Community Services, p 5; [Submission 21](#), Chinese Australian Services Society, p 3; Mr Wark, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 38.

<sup>142</sup> [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, p 2; [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 4; [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 5; Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 5; Mr Anthony Pang, Deputy Chairperson/Secretary, Chinese Australian Services Society, and Ms Chew, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, pp 18-19.

<sup>143</sup> [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 10.

<sup>144</sup> Dr Voola, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 25; Ms Pan, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, pp 26-27.

<sup>145</sup> [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 7; [Submission 8](#), Anglicare North Coast, p 1; [Submission 31](#), Canterbury Bankstown Interagency, p 1.

for education and employment purposes.<sup>146</sup>

- 2.32 The needs of young people can be different to older people in the community. Young people may prefer to access information via social media, while older people may rely more on radio, SMS, and case workers and community groups for information.<sup>147</sup>
- 2.33 We heard that children and young people from CALD communities had additional responsibilities during the pandemic, including supporting the learning of younger siblings, additional caring and home duties, navigating online literacy, and acting as interpreters for family members.<sup>148</sup>
- 2.34 SydWest Multicultural Services told us that campaigns targeted towards young people should provide practical examples relating to their social and family context. For example, explaining who they could and couldn't visit would make it easier for young people to understand and comply with COVID-19 restrictions.<sup>149</sup>
- 2.35 The case study below discusses the work of Multicultural Youth COVID-19 Ambassadors.

#### Case study 8: Multicultural Youth COVID-19 Ambassadors<sup>150</sup>

The Advocate for Children and Young People, in their broader disaster work and during COVID-19, found that young people wanted to be kept informed through communication that is directly targeted to them.

In response to calls from young people asking to hear from people they relate to, the NSW Government engaged young people to co-design and deliver targeted messages to young people. The Multicultural Health Communication Service engaged 12 Multicultural Youth COVID-19 Ambassadors to increase health literacy about COVID-19 among young people from CALD backgrounds and connect with young people across the state.

#### NSW Government's multi-channel approach to COVID-19 messaging

- 2.36 The NSW Government said that a key lesson during COVID-19 was that a multi-faceted, multi-channelled communications approach is vital to reaching audiences when messaging is time sensitive.<sup>151</sup>
- 2.37 We heard that the Department of Customer Service (DCS) undertook wide-ranging planning during the Delta outbreak to ensure CALD communities had equitable access to information, through crisis communications across multiple channels. Information was distributed in a number of ways: in person and online in language information sessions; translated fact sheets, posters, videos, social tiles; updated website content; and frontline customer service communication

<sup>146</sup> [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 8; Dr Voola, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 28.

<sup>147</sup> [Submission 21](#), Chinese Australian Services Society, pp 2-3; Mr Buraho, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 10; Ms Lu, and Ms Chew, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 23.

<sup>148</sup> [Submission 16](#), Liverpool City Council, pp 1-2; [Submission 29](#), NSW Council of Social Service, p 10.

<sup>149</sup> [Submission 17](#), SydWest Multicultural Services, p 5; Ms Lee, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, pp 5, 9.

<sup>150</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 25-26.

<sup>151</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 21.

via Service NSW.<sup>152</sup>

- 2.38 Government agencies coordinated to deliver in-language messages as quickly as possible through channels preferred by target audiences. This included advertising, media partnerships and direct communication, for example:
- A government advertising campaign with messages on health advice and financial support targeting multicultural communities across print, radio, digital and social media in 22 languages.
  - Partnering with SBS to live-interpret the Premier's 11am COVID-19 press conferences into 10 languages. Over 2 million people were reached with more than 30,000 average daily views.
  - Using several social media channels to provide accurate and timely information to CALD groups (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube).
  - Distributing 246,000 translated flyers with public health messages and information about financial support with food hampers to vulnerable families.
  - Engaging via email, including translated COVID-19 messages and communication resources (videos, social media tiles, audio files), with over 200 CALD community and stakeholder groups and encouraging them to share the email messaging through their networks, channels and communities.
  - The Department of Education linking to translated Government and SBS COVID-19 fact sheets and social media posts to enable schools to easily share information with their communities.<sup>153</sup>
- 2.39 The Government said that the COVID-19 lockdowns showed that using qualified interpreters and translators is key to ensuring linguistic access to crisis communications and disseminating critical information. During the Delta outbreak, MNSW engaged National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) accredited translators and recognised practitioners to undertake 2,224 assignments for translations into 61 languages.<sup>154</sup>
- 2.40 We heard that during the pandemic Government agencies were prepared to engage in different ways and use new channels to reach CALD communities. Dr Kerry Chant, NSW Health's Deputy Secretary, Population and Public Health and Chief Health Officer, told us that the Government 'did many things with the community's support and guidance that have to be embedded in our future responses'.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 31.

<sup>153</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 19-21.

<sup>154</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 15, 16.

<sup>155</sup> Dr Kerry Chant, Deputy Secretary, Population and Public Health, and Chief Health Officer, NSW Health, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 18.

## A crisis communications strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

### Summary

A culturally appropriate crisis communications strategy should be developed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The NSW Government should work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to develop the strategy.

### Recommendation 5

**That the NSW Government works with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to develop a targeted, culturally appropriate crisis communications strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.**

- 2.41 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were not explicitly referred to in the scope of this inquiry, however some recommendations have been made as certain submissions reflected a clear need to ensure involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations in crisis communications for communities.
- 2.42 The vulnerability of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population during crises like COVID-19 means that it is vital that a tailored, culturally appropriate communications strategy is developed to reach these communities. The most effective way to develop this strategy is by working closely with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- 2.43 We heard that Aboriginal people were identified as a priority population during the pandemic as they were at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 and developing serious illness and death. The Aboriginal Health and Medical Council (AHMRC) noted that Aboriginal communities in western New South Wales were 'ravaged by the pandemic', with LGAs including Bourke, Walgett and Coonamble experiencing high case numbers during the pandemic's peak in 2021.<sup>156</sup>
- 2.44 The AHMRC told us that communications rolled out across Aboriginal communities were unclear and inappropriately targeted. Problems with communications during the pandemic included:
- Lack of clear, culturally safe information about vaccination. Hesitancy about the AstraZeneca vaccine could have been managed through targeted communications. Messaging for the general population was not appropriate for Aboriginal communities.
  - Limited communications targeted to Aboriginal communities despite the demonstrated need.
  - Media releases, social media tiles and other resources for health services were often culturally inappropriate and had to be reviewed and redrafted by Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs).

<sup>156</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, p 3.

- Little or no extra funding for Aboriginal services to develop communications, which were largely centrally coordinated in Health and other government agencies. ACCHOs did communications work using existing resources, which caused significant strain on those resources.
- Organisations like ACCHOs are largely excluded from critical conversations during emergency responses and often get information when it is too late or no longer valid.<sup>157</sup>

- 2.45 We heard that crisis communications for Aboriginal communities need to take into account a number of factors including:
- The ongoing impacts of colonisation and institutional neglect.
  - Barriers faced by Aboriginal people when accessing western health systems.
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may not speak standard English as their first language and may need translated and/or easily accessible communications materials, including visual aids.
  - Aboriginal cultural customs and practices, and the role of governance, family kinship structures and relationships.<sup>158</sup>
- 2.46 The AHMRC told us that local organisations like ACCHOs are 'an invaluable asset in times of crisis'. They said that the Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector is best positioned to deliver messaging and crisis communications, as they have existing relationships and trust in their communities and access to information that mainstream agencies lack.<sup>159</sup>
- 2.47 The AHMRC recommended that the Government improves its engagement with the ACCHO sector, recognising the integral role that the sector plays in Aboriginal communities and its expertise in culturally safe practices. It also recommended that the Government explores the development of a targeted crisis communications strategy for Aboriginal communities.<sup>160</sup>
- 2.48 The case study below is an example of work done by ACCOs to communicate with their communities about COVID-19.

**Case study 9: COVID-19 communications developed by the Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector<sup>161</sup>**

Indigenous organisations, particularly Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, took the initiative to develop their own COVID-19 communications. The Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council launched its 'Join us you mob campaign' and provided communications support to its member services.

<sup>157</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, pp 3-4.

<sup>158</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, p 4.

<sup>159</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, p 4.

<sup>160</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, pp 4-5.

<sup>161</sup> [Submission 4](#), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, p 3.



The member services were proactive in getting messages out to their communities. For example, Katungul launched the Southern NSW Aboriginal Community COVID-19 Resources Group, a one-stop-shop for information and resources; and Bullinah undertook wide community consultation well before cases began to peak, to get input on how the crisis should be managed and educate community members.

## Funding for community and multilingual broadcast media

### Summary

The NSW Government should increase funding for community and multilingual broadcast media to ensure that it is adequate to support the provision of crisis information to CALD communities.

### Recommendation 6

**That the NSW Government increases funding for community and multilingual broadcast media, to ensure that broadcasters are adequately resourced to provide crisis information to CALD communities.**

2.49 We heard about the work done by local multilingual and community broadcasters during COVID-19 across multiple platforms:

- The National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) produced over 52 audio Explainers in 20 languages in NSW from January 2022, and distributed them via digital platforms and community radio stations.
- NEMBC worked with the NSW Government from January to September 2022 to produce a Multilingual News Service (MNS), providing COVID-19 information for CALD communities. The MNS includes a daily news service, Explainers and translated audio, which were distributed to community radio stations and on social media networks.<sup>162</sup>
- SBS's Coronavirus portal with content in over 60 languages gathers multilingual COVID-19 news and information, including government advisories, explainer videos, infographics and fact sheets. SBS worked with the NSW Government to provide live interpreting of press conferences in 10 languages during the Delta outbreak.<sup>163</sup>
- SBS Radio connects diverse community members through its social media platforms. During the pandemic, many Australians used social media to access news and information, and connect with people. Most of SBS's more than 60 language services are available via social media.<sup>164</sup>
- SBS On Demand was a repository of SBS's specifically created multilingual video-on-demand content, such as the coronavirus explainer, 'how to wear a mask', and a vaccine explainer. Many videos were produced with Federal and

<sup>162</sup> [Submission 30](#), National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council, p 23.

<sup>163</sup> [Submission 24](#), SBS, pp 1, 5.

<sup>164</sup> [Submission 24](#), SBS, pp 8-9.

state government entities and, at the height of the crisis, were placed at the top of the SBS On Demand landing page to ensure maximum visibility.<sup>165</sup>

- 2.50 We heard that CALD communities experienced challenges accessing accurate health information from overseas media. Ms Randa Kattan, Chief Executive Officer of Arab Council Australia, advised that members of the community were sourcing information from overseas and interstate and sharing this information with their friends and families. This resulted in confusion stemming from the discrepancies 'between the laws that applied in New South Wales and those from overseas and interstate'.<sup>166</sup>

### **Community and multilingual radio is a cost-effective way to reach CALD communities**

- 2.51 We heard that community and multilingual radio is an important medium with high reach. Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara told us that it allows for immediacy, the use of multiple languages, and communication to oral cultures who don't read in their language.<sup>167</sup>
- 2.52 Community radio surveys indicate high reach among the CALD community. NEMBC's Multicultural News Service for Victoria and NSW is estimated to reach 2.2 million listeners each month. Community radio McNair survey results show that 60 per cent listen to community radio in an average month.<sup>168</sup> McNair research also indicates high levels of awareness of the SBS Network among speakers of Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese, and Punjabi, the top four largest language-speaking communities in NSW.<sup>169</sup>
- 2.53 We heard that community radio is a cost-effective way to reach CALD communities. NEMBC said that the community broadcasting sector is the most cost effective and efficient way to produce ethnic and multicultural radio for Australia's CALD communities.<sup>170</sup>
- 2.54 NEMBC said that Victoria's multicultural news service has produced 28 Explainers over 20 months. It estimated that for every \$1 invested, over \$6.50 of total value is created.<sup>171</sup>
- 2.55 We heard that NEMBC found it difficult to obtain Government and philanthropic funding during the pandemic, requiring to use its own funding instead. The Victorian Government started funding NEMBC in September 2020, but this will end in March 2023. The NSW Government funded NEMBC from January 2022, but the funding ended in August 2022.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> [Submission 24](#), SBS, p 12.

<sup>166</sup> Ms Kattan, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 42.

<sup>167</sup> Distinguished Professor Macnamara, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 6; Mr David Hua, Director, Audio and Languages Content, SBS, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 33.

<sup>168</sup> [Submission 30](#), National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council, p 4.

<sup>169</sup> [Submission 24](#), SBS, pp 13-14.

<sup>170</sup> [Submission 30](#), National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council, pp 4, 38-40.

<sup>171</sup> [Submission 30](#), National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council, pp 4, 38-40.

<sup>172</sup> Mr Russell Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council and Chief News Director, Multilingual News Service, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 7.

- 2.56 NEMBC have obtained funding from Facebook and the Walkley Foundation to start a national news service, which includes COVID-19 and flood information and general news. However, that funding also ends in March 2023. Mr Russell Anderson said that NEMBC would need between \$200,000 and \$400,000 to maintain the service, depending on the number of languages it has on air.<sup>173</sup>

#### **NSW Government's partnerships with multilingual and community media**

- 2.57 The NSW Government said that 'the multicultural media sector has been an important tool in disseminating NSW-specific information to diverse audiences that may be more likely to consume information from abroad'.<sup>174</sup>
- 2.58 We heard that MNSW's research with Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese speakers showed that multicultural media, specifically SBS daily press conferences (live interpreting) can provide a platform for credible and trustworthy advice.<sup>175</sup>
- 2.59 The Government said that during the Delta outbreak it established a Multicultural Media Grants Program. MNSW has delivered \$2 million through the Program, with grants of up to \$50,000 to multicultural media organisations to support media outlets and ensure the sustainability of the sector.<sup>176</sup>
- 2.60 Mr William Murphy from DCS said that the Government 'redirected a lot of investment into those media channels to engage those communities, and organisations like NEMBC were really important to that'. He noted that the Government has a target of around 7.5 per cent of advertising spending to be directed to CALD and Aboriginal communities. Before Delta, that proportion was around 13 or 14 per cent, and during Delta it rose to 29 per cent.<sup>177</sup>
- 2.61 Mr Murphy said that funding was redirected to CALD and Aboriginal communities to better engage these communities through media channels including NEMBC. He told us that partnerships between the Government and media organisations like NEMBC will be embedded into future crisis communications.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Mr Anderson, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, pp 7, 9.

<sup>174</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 18.

<sup>175</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 32.

<sup>176</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, pp 18-19.

<sup>177</sup> Mr William Murphy, Deputy Secretary, Customer, Delivery and Transformation, Department of Customer Service, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 13.

<sup>178</sup> Mr Murphy, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, pp 13-14.

# Chapter Three – Preventing racism and discrimination during crises

## Racism and discrimination increased during COVID-19

### Summary

Racism and discrimination towards CALD communities grew during the COVID-19 pandemic. This had a negative impact on members of the CALD community and caused a lack of trust which affected crisis communications.

### Finding 3

**There was an increase in racism and discrimination towards CALD communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This caused trauma and fear and had negative health consequences for CALD communities. It also led to a loss of trust in Government by some in the CALD community, which affected crisis communications.**

- 3.1 The Committee heard that racism and discrimination towards CALD communities increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. We acknowledge the experience of members of the CALD community during this time and the harm it caused.
- 3.2 The Government submitted that, during the waves of the COVID-19 pandemic 'certain sentiments of racism and discrimination were amplified'.<sup>179</sup> This observation was consistent with the views of other inquiry participants, such as ACON, who observed that the 'pandemic has seen increased experiences of racism and discrimination among sections of our population'.<sup>180</sup> Similarly, Settlement Services International told us that 'infectious disease outbreaks create feelings of fear that can exacerbate racist and xenophobic behaviour'.<sup>181</sup>
- 3.3 The Chinese Australian Services Society submitted that during the pandemic, CALD communities experienced increased discrimination and targeted racism, particularly people in the Chinese community.<sup>182</sup>
- 3.4 The Scanlon Foundation's *Mapping Social Cohesion Report* found that perceptions of racism being a problem in Australia increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>183</sup>
- 3.5 The Asian Australian Alliance *COVID-19 Racism Incident Report Survey Comprehensive Report 2021* considered 541 reports of COVID-19 racism incidents between 2 April 2020 and 28 June 2021. The report found that a majority of

<sup>179</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 37.

<sup>180</sup> [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 2; Mr Tim Wark, Manager of Community Partnerships and Population Programs, ACON, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 41.

<sup>181</sup> [Submission 11](#), Settlement Services International, p 4.

<sup>182</sup> [Submission 21](#), Chinese Australian Services Society, p 4.

<sup>183</sup> Emeritus Professor Andrew Markus, [Mapping Social Cohesion 2021](#), viewed 14 November 2022, pp 11, 48.

incidents occurred in public spaces and were perpetrated by strangers.<sup>184</sup>

3.6 A study by the Australian National University found that more than 80 per cent of Asian Australians reported discrimination during the pandemic, with many experiencing xenophobia and racism, including physical assaults and verbal threats.<sup>185</sup>

3.7 Ms Erin Wen Ai Chew, National Convener and Co-Founder, Asian Australian Alliance, told us that the trauma felt by the Asian Australian community needs to be acknowledged:

... there needs to be an actual address or a symbolic gesture of acknowledgement that a lot of damage, a lot of trauma, and a lot of fear was caused in Australia to the Asian Australian community as a result of how COVID-19 was spoken about at both a State and a national level. Without that acknowledgement I think a lot of that trauma will still exist and it is going to be very difficult for communities to move on from there as well.<sup>186</sup>

### Perceptions of discrimination in the Government's response to COVID-19

3.8 Inquiry participants referred to a perception of over-policing of certain CALD communities, the vilification of certain CALD community groups in the media and difficulty accessing trustworthy information, as examples of discrimination experienced by CALD communities.<sup>187</sup>

3.9 ACON suggested that the racism experienced by CALD communities was 'compounded by simplistic and dangerous media messaging, and disproportionate restrictions and over-policing in multicultural areas'.<sup>188</sup> Anti-Discrimination NSW highlighted anecdotal reports from multicultural communities in Southwest and Western Sydney about harsher stay-at-home restrictions that were perceived as discriminatory and racist, and heavy police presences that meant 'some communities felt targeted and criminalised by the NSW government's response'.<sup>189</sup>

3.10 Arab Council Australia observed that the communication methods and tools used to convey and enforce public health messages during COVID-19 caused divisions, disenfranchised and criminalised Western Sydney and South-Western Sydney communities and eroded trust in government.<sup>190</sup>

3.11 ACON told us that the racism experienced more broadly during the pandemic

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<sup>184</sup> Asian Australian Alliance, [COVID-19 Racism Incident Report Survey Comprehensive Report 2021](#), viewed 14 November 2022, pp 5, 7-8.

<sup>185</sup> [Submission 15](#), Core Community Services, p 10; P Mercer, [Asian-Australians Victims of COVID-Fueled Racism According to Australian Study](#), *Voice of America*, 2 November 2020, viewed 24 November 2022.

<sup>186</sup> Ms Erin Wen Ai Chew, National Convener and Co-Founder, Asian Australian Alliance, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 21.

<sup>187</sup> For example: [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 4; [Submission 10](#), Local Government Multicultural Network, pp 2-3; [Submission 15](#), Core Community Services, p 10; [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, p 4.

<sup>188</sup> [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 2.

<sup>189</sup> [Submission 6](#), Anti-Discrimination NSW, p 2.

<sup>190</sup> [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, p 2.

cannot be separated from crisis communication.<sup>191</sup>

- 3.12 Arab Council Australia submitted that 'persons in positions of persuasion and influence, including government ministers, have a higher obligation to uphold racial tolerance and social harmony and should not be engaging in discriminatory rhetoric.'<sup>192</sup>
- 3.13 Inquiry participants told us that messaging in mainstream media amplified racism and discrimination. SydWest Multicultural Services, for example, stated that inconsistent restrictions between Eastern and Western Sydney worsened issues that heightened racism and class tensions and that this 'was not helped by the mainstream media.'<sup>193</sup>
- 3.14 Ms April Pan, Co-convenor, Canterbury-Bankstown Multicultural Interagency, said that the 'media narrative or discourse around the whole pandemic sent the very strong sort of racism message from the very beginning'.<sup>194</sup>
- 3.15 The Multicultural Education Team in the NSW Department of Education recommended that non-biased language be used in media broadcasts to avoid stigmatising certain communities or generalising across communities.<sup>195</sup>
- 3.16 Core Community Services said that the Government and Parliament should address the issue of media racism and discrimination against CALD communities during crises and more broadly, and noted that this may improve awareness of CALD communities within Australian society.<sup>196</sup>

### **Impacts of racism and discrimination on the CALD community**

- 3.17 Inquiry participants spoke about the trauma and fear caused by racism and discrimination. We also heard that racism and discrimination can erode trust in government, which can have compounding impacts on community/government relationships. This can degrade the value of future crisis communications and lead to poorer overall outcomes for the CALD community.
- 3.18 Several inquiry participants highlighted the negative impacts that racism and discrimination had on the mental health of individuals in the CALD community, with the Asian Australian Alliance noting that the 'rise of anti-Asian hate over the last few years as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the anti-China rhetoric has caused trauma and fear among many Asian Australian communities'.<sup>197</sup>
- 3.19 We heard from ACON that racism and discrimination produce significant health

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<sup>191</sup> [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 4.

<sup>192</sup> [Submission 27](#), Arab Council Australia, p 6.

<sup>193</sup> [Submission 17](#), SydWest Multicultural Services, p 6.

<sup>194</sup> Ms April Pan, Co-convenor, Canterbury-Bankstown Multicultural Interagency, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 27.

<sup>195</sup> [Submission 9](#), Multicultural Education team, Educational Standards, NSW Department of Education, p 1.

<sup>196</sup> [Submission 15](#), Core Community Services, p 11.

<sup>197</sup> [Submission 14](#), Asian Australian Alliance, p 2.

disparities, not only in terms of COVID-19, but also more broadly.<sup>198</sup>

- 3.20 Mr Fulin Yan highlighted the way in which a fear of discrimination or violence meant that 'many people from these communities are reluctant to seek help from authorities or to access services, for fear of being targeted.'<sup>199</sup>
- 3.21 Inquiry participants noted that racism and discrimination can reduce trust in government, and negatively impact crisis communications. ACON said that racism and discrimination 'erode trust in media and government, meaning that these are no longer effective conduits for crisis communication.'<sup>200</sup>
- 3.22 The NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors stated that the sense of being targeted meant that CALD communities the Service works with were less receptive to information from Government sources. The Service told us that some community members felt past discrimination by the Government reduced the trust and credibility of information shared by the Government.<sup>201</sup>
- 3.23 We acknowledge that racism and discrimination can impact on the personal health and wellbeing of individuals in CALD communities, and that it discourages people from seeking aid and being receptive to important communications at times of crisis.

#### **NSW Government's approach to racism and discrimination related to crisis communications**

- 3.24 The NSW Government told us that it is committed to eliminating all forms of racism, hate and discrimination, as 'there is no place for racism, discrimination or religious intolerance in our multicultural state'. The Government noted that this is especially important during crises, when 'tensions and stress levels are likely elevated, enhancing existing vulnerabilities'.<sup>202</sup>
- 3.25 The Government told us that it used partnerships across agencies and in multicultural forums with community leaders to collaborate with CALD communities to develop and distribute crisis communications that were suitable for CALD communities. For example, the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and the Ministry of Health worked with CALD and multicultural stakeholders and audiences to ensure that the references, terminology, preferred language, tone and style used in crisis communications were suitable for their target audiences.<sup>203</sup>
- 3.26 We heard that the Government also developed an evidence-based set of messages and standard words to be used in response to extremist or hateful incidents. This communications approach was Cabinet-approved for use by Government Ministers and agencies 'to support stronger social cohesion, rather

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<sup>198</sup> [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 4.

<sup>199</sup> [Submission 1](#), Mr Fulin Yan, p 4.

<sup>200</sup> [Submission 5](#), ACON, p 4.

<sup>201</sup> [Submission 33](#), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, p 8.

<sup>202</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 37.

<sup>203</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 38.

than division and polarisation'.<sup>204</sup>

- 3.27 The Government submitted that it had mechanisms to identify, monitor, and share information, and to respond to racism and hate incidents during a crisis or emergency. For example, the NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN) empowers Multicultural NSW (MNSW) to support integrated responses across Government agencies to issues associated with cultural diversity. COMPLAN aims to maintain and promote community harmony, build community resilience, and better equip the State to address situations that threaten community harmony.<sup>205</sup>
- 3.28 We heard that COMPLAN was activated in February 2020 to identify, monitor, and share information about racism and hate related to the COVID-19 pandemic. MNSW implemented a COVID-19 community engagement strategy with weekly and fortnightly community engagement forums across NSW. The Government told us that community members are encouraged to report incidents of vilification or discrimination to Anti-Discrimination NSW and hate or bias crimes to the NSW Police Force.<sup>206</sup>
- 3.29 The Government stated that 'the spread of misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories around COVID-19 and the Government response was a consistent concern' from the start of the pandemic. We heard that community leaders in South-West Sydney raised concerns with the NSW Police Force and MNSW that their communities felt unfairly targeted by police enforcing public health orders. The Government said that this feeling was exacerbated on social media by decontextualised footage of arrests that contributed to misperceptions about the police response.<sup>207</sup>
- 3.30 The Government combatted this by providing community leaders with accurate health information and advice and empowering them to convey this information to their communities, in their own languages and via the most appropriate media. This was supported by a communications strategy to combat misinformation that DCJ developed alongside religious and multicultural organisations.<sup>208</sup>
- 3.31 The importance of combatting misinformation with accurate messaging was stressed by Mr Russell Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC), who said that the NEMBC sought to counter issues such as fake news and racism by delivering consistent reliable messages.<sup>209</sup>
- 3.32 The Government advised that it monitors social media engagement with NSW agencies and that this informs its communication strategies and tactics to combat

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<sup>204</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 40.

<sup>205</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 39.

<sup>206</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 39.

<sup>207</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 38.

<sup>208</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 38.

<sup>209</sup> Mr Russell Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council and Chief News Director, Multilingual News Service, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 11.



racism and other discrimination. For example, the Department of Customer Service and the Ministry of Health actively hide or delete abusive, offensive, or racist posts on Government social media pages that they manage. The Ministry of Health, on the other hand, 'manages risks of vilification of specific communities by communicating directly with community leaders, instead of a one size fits all approach'.<sup>210</sup>

- 3.33 The case study below describes MNSW's Remove Hate from the Debate campaign.

#### Case study 10: Remove Hate from the Debate campaign<sup>211</sup>

During the first COVID-19 wave in 2020, MNSW increased its support of the Remove Hate from the Debate online campaign, which gives young people the tools and resources to speak out against online hate and promote community harmony.

The social media campaign has reached nearly one million people. This peaked during COVID-19 with the project reaching 400,000 people between March and August 2020.

In 2022 MNSW undertook to review and update the Remove Hate from the Debate initiative. The review will involve working with community partners to enhance the campaign's capacity to respond to online and offline hate.

## Working with the CALD community to combat racism and discrimination during crises

### Summary

The Government should work with CALD community organisations and leaders on measures to prevent racism and discrimination in crisis situations.

### Recommendation 7

**That the NSW Government consults with CALD community organisations and community leaders on policies and strategies to prevent racism and discrimination during crises.**

- 3.34 CALD community groups have been integral to many of the successful strategies employed to combat racism and discrimination. We consider that CALD community groups and community leaders are well placed to advise the Government on strategies to combat racism and discrimination during crises and should therefore be engaged proactively.
- 3.35 The Multicultural Education Team within the NSW Department of Education recommended that the NSW Government engages directly with community members and provides safe ways to raise concerns about perceptions of racism 'in the implementation of crisis response protocols, and to allay community fears

<sup>210</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 39.

<sup>211</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 40.

of being unduly scapegoated or targeted'.<sup>212</sup>

- 3.36 Community Hubs Australia told us that increased collaboration and consultation with local community leaders in planning and executing crisis communications would help to combat racism and discrimination.<sup>213</sup>
- 3.37 Core Community Services recommended that the Government recognises racism and discrimination against CALD communities as a long-standing challenge and works with CALD community representatives on initiatives to address it.<sup>214</sup>
- 3.38 Ms Erin Wen Ai Chew, National Convener and Co-Founder of the Asian Australian Alliance, told us that engagement at a grass-roots level with the CALD community could help prevent racism during crises:
- ... You really have to get down into the community, those who are working in those communities, and really talk to them about how to communicate about this information so as to not cause any racism or any racial collateral to that community.<sup>215</sup>
- 3.39 The NSW Government provided details of its COVID-19 Delta Outbreak Community Sentiment Project, which involved a collaboration between MNSW and community leaders to ensure 'messaging was delivered with the appropriate tone, language dialect and nuance.'<sup>216</sup>
- 3.40 A case study of the NSW COMPACT project is below.

**Case study 11: COMPACT projects engage young people to support harmony<sup>217</sup>**

The NSW COMPACT program aims to inspire and empower young people to advocate against hate, fear and violence. Through supporting 15 youth engagement projects since 2021 with more than 50 partner organisations, the program has focused on championing cultural diversity and community harmony through community-based initiatives.

In November 2021, MNSW opened a special round of COMPACT grants for six-month projects that focus on supporting community-led initiatives to strengthen community connectedness and togetherness as part of community resilience and recovery in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nineteen new COMPACT Social Cohesion and Community Resilience projects were given funding in January 2022 as part of this funding round.

<sup>212</sup> [Submission 9](#), Multicultural Education team, Educational Standards, NSW Department of Education, p 1.

<sup>213</sup> [Submission 20](#), Community Hubs Australia, p 4.

<sup>214</sup> [Submission 15](#), Core Community Services, p 11.

<sup>215</sup> Ms Chew, [Transcript of evidence](#), 16 August 2022, p 18.

<sup>216</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 27.

<sup>217</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 44.

## Clearer processes for reporting racism and discrimination and a national anti-racism framework

### Recommendation 8

**That the NSW Government reviews current pathways for reporting or making complaints of discrimination and racism, with a view to improving these avenues and preventing racism and discrimination in society.**

- 3.41 We heard that more needs to be done to spread awareness of the channels to manage and report incidents of racism and discrimination. The Asian Australian Alliance told us that a clearer process is needed for submitting complaints of racism and discrimination when crisis communications are relayed to the community. The Alliance said that there 'needs to be an avenue to address the collateral that comes out of racism and discrimination related crisis communications'.<sup>218</sup>
- 3.42 The Chinese Australian Services Society recommended that the Government considers the need for new laws and policies to protect victims of racism, and the provision of additional resources to raise awareness and improve reporting channels.<sup>219</sup>
- 3.43 Core Community Services supported reform to anti-discrimination legislation to make it more accessible to victims, with stronger provisions for online vilification, and an approach that recognises overlapping sources of discrimination. They submitted that although there is Federal and State legislation against discrimination on the basis of national or ethnic origin, it is clearly inadequate to deal with systemic racial and ethnic discrimination, particularly during crises.<sup>220</sup>
- 3.44 Mr Joseph La Posta, Chief Executive Officer, MNSW said that he was pleased with the relationships MNSW has built with the 'hate crimes division of police and others' noting that every matter referred by MNSW has been taken seriously and that the division has allocated appropriate resources to support them.<sup>221</sup>
- 3.45 We heard about the need for greater collaboration between State and Federal government bodies for a coordinated response to racism and discrimination, for example, through the establishment of a national anti-racism strategy.
- 3.46 Mr La Posta spoke about the importance of developing a national framework around racism, noting that it is unhelpful for different jurisdictions to build their own anti-racism strategies because 'it creates conflicting messages at times when you need really uniformed and strong messaging around these key threats to a cohesive and harmonious society'.<sup>222</sup>
- 3.47 The Chinese Australian Services Society supported a national platform for state members 'to speak up on behalf of the community in order to tackle racism and

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<sup>218</sup> [Submission 14](#), Asian Australian Alliance, p 2.

<sup>219</sup> [Submission 21](#), Chinese Australian Services Society, p 5.

<sup>220</sup> [Submission 15](#), Core Community Services, p 12.

<sup>221</sup> Mr Joseph La Posta, Chief Executive Officer, Multicultural NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 19.

<sup>222</sup> Mr La Posta, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 October 2022, p 19.

its impact on mental health'. They said that this initiative would allow leaders to come together and advise the Federal government on issues that impact on CALD communities.<sup>223</sup>

3.48 We note the Australian Human Rights Commission's plan to develop a National Anti-Racism Framework, which is intended to be a long-term, central reference point to guide actions on anti-racism by government, NGOs, business, educators, health professionals, police and justice authorities, civil society, and the community. A concept paper outlining the framework's principles, outcomes and strategies was released for public submissions in early 2022.<sup>224</sup>

3.49 The NSW Government told us that it prepared a submission on the proposed National Anti-Racism Framework. The submission gave an overview of the Government's commitment to addressing racism and racial inequality, including through legal protections, policies, frameworks, workforce development and training programs, community awareness campaigns, community partnerships and Indigenous reconciliation and reparation strategies.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> [Submission 21](#), Chinese Australian Services Society, p 5.

<sup>224</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, [National Anti-racism framework](#), viewed 17 November 2022.

<sup>225</sup> [Submission 25](#), NSW Government, p 40.

## Appendix One – Terms of reference

That the Committee on Community Services inquire into and report on improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, with particular reference to:

- a) use of multicultural and CALD community groups and networks to distribute in-language information
- b) ways to improve channels of communication with CALD communities
- c) addressing racism and discrimination related to crisis communications.

## Appendix Two – Conduct of inquiry

### **Inquiry referral**

The inquiry was self-referred and the Committee resolved to conduct the inquiry on 31 March 2022.

### **Call for submissions**

The Committee issued a media release on 17 May 2022 and wrote to key stakeholders inviting them to make a submission to the inquiry.

Submissions closed on 17 June 2022. Thirty three submissions were received from advocacy and community groups, academics, the NSW Government and media organisations. A list of submissions is at Appendix Three. Submissions are available on the Committee's [webpage](#).

### **Hearings**

The Committee held two public hearings at Parliament House on 16 August and 17 October 2022. Representatives of community groups, advocacy groups, media organisations, academia and government departments appeared in person and via videoconference.

A list of witnesses is at Appendix Four. Transcripts of evidence taken at the hearings are available on the Committee's [webpage](#).

## Appendix Three – Submissions

| <b>No</b> | <b>Author</b>  |
|-----------|--|
| 1         | Mr Fulin Yan   |
| 2         | Mr Jason Lee Holcroft  |
| 3         | Mr Grant Mistler   |
| 4         | Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW                                      |
| 5         | ACON   |
| 6         | Anti-Discrimination NSW  |
| 7         | Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara  |
| 8         | Anglicare North Coast  |
| 9         | Multicultural Education team, Educational Standards, NSW Department of Education           |
| 10        | Local Government Multicultural Network (LGMN)  |
| 11        | Settlement Services International  |
| 12        | Carers NSW   |
| 13        | Chinese Community Council of Australia (Victorian Chapter) - CCCAV                         |
| 14        | Asian Australian Alliance  |
| 15        | CORE Community Services  |
| 16        | Liverpool City Council   |
| 17        | SydWest Multicultural Services   |
| 18        | Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre   |
| 19        | Fire Brigade Employees' Union (FBEU)   |
| 20        | Community Hubs Australia   |
| 21        | Chinese Australian Services Society Ltd  |
| 22        | Australian Federation of Islamic Councils  |
| 23        | Indian (Sub-Cont) Crisis & Support Agency  |
| 24        | SBS  |
| 25        | NSW Government   |
| 26        | Dr Michael Camit   |
| 27        | Arab Council Australia   |
| 28        | Shayna Humanitarian Services   |
| 29        | NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS)  |
| 30        | National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC)                            |
| 31        | Canterbury Bankstown Multicultural Interagency   |
| 32        | Infrastructure NSW   |
| 33        | NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) |

## Appendix Four – Witnesses

16 August 2022

Parliament House, Jubilee Room, Sydney

| <b>Witness</b>      | <b>Position and Organisation</b>   |
|---------------------|--|
| Mr Farhad Arian     | Stakeholder Engagement Manager, CORE Community Services  |
| Mr John Buraho      | Settlement Manager, Multicultural Communities, CORE Community Services                             |
| Ms Selina Lee       | Marketing & Communications Manager, SydWest Multicultural Services                                 |
| Ms Eleanor Harris   | Acting Manager, Building Resilience for Emergency Responses, NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) |
| Ms Nemat Kharboutli | Manager, Linking Hearts Service, Muslim Women Australia, NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS)     |
| Mr Anthony Pang     | Deputy Chairperson/Secretary, Chinese Australian Services Society Ltd                              |
| Ms Jane Lu          | Executive Officer, Chinese Australian Services Society Ltd   |
| Ms Erin Wen Ai Chew | National Convener and Co-Founder, Asian Australian Alliance  |
| Ms April Pan        | Co-convenor, Canterbury Bankstown Multicultural Interagency  |
| Dr Archana Voola    | Policy Officer, Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre   |
| Mr Nathan Hagarty   | Chair of Board, Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre   |
| Mr David Hua        | Director, Audio and Languages Content, SBS   |
| Mr Michael Coonan   | Head of Government Relations and Regulatory Affairs, SBS   |
| Mr Tim Wark         | Manager of Community Partnerships and Population Programs, ACON                                    |
| Ms Lucy Watson      | Policy and Development Officer, ACON   |
| Ms Randa Kattan     | Chief Executive Officer, Arab Council Australia  |
| Ms Yamamah Agah     | Group Manager Newcomers, Settlement and Integration, Settlement Services International             |
| Ms Toni Beauchamp   | Social Policy Lead, Settlement Services International  |
| Ms Türkan Aksoy     | Secretary, Local Government Multicultural Network (LGMN)   |



**17 October 2022****Parliament House, Macquarie Room, Sydney**

| <b>Witness</b>  | <b>Position and Organisation</b>   |
|---|--|
| Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara<br>PhD, FAMI, CPM, FAMEC, FPRIA |  |
| Mr Russell Anderson   | Chief Executive Officer, NEMBC and Chief News Director, Multilingual News Service, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) |
| Mr Anthony Cooke APM  | Assistant Commissioner, Commander, Central Metropolitan Region, New South Wales Police Force   |
| Mr William Murphy   | Deputy Secretary, Customer, Delivery and Transformation, Department of Customer Service  |
| Dr Kerry Chant AO PSM   | Deputy Secretary, Population and Public Health, and Chief Health Officer, NSW Health   |
| Mr Joseph La Posta  | Chief Executive Officer, Multicultural NSW   |
| Ms Amanda Stephinson  | Director, Public Health (COVID-19) Communications, NSW Ministry of Health  |

## Appendix Five – Extracts from minutes

### **MINUTES OF MEETING NO 20**

1.34pm, 31 March 2022

Room 1254 and Webex

#### **Members present**

Ms Lindsay (Chair), Mr Clancy, Ms Leong

#### **Officers present**

Rohan Tyler, Dora Oravec, Amy Pond, Nicolle Gill

#### **Apologies**

Mr Saunders, Ms Gibbons, Mr Harris, Ms Doyle

#### **1. \*\*\***

#### **2. Confirmation of minutes**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Clancy, seconded by Ms Leong: That the minutes of the meeting of 24 March 2022 be confirmed.

#### **3. Proposed new inquiry - discussion of terms of reference**

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 29 March 2022, from the Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Services, regarding suggested topics for a future inquiry to be conducted by the Committee.

Discussion ensued.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong, seconded by Mr Clancy: That the Committee on Community Services inquire into and report on improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, in accordance with the draft terms of reference, as amended.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong, seconded by Mr Clancy: That the Committee calls for submissions to be received by 16 May 2022.

The Committee agreed to meet in the coming week to consider a stakeholder list for the inquiry.

#### **4. Next meeting**

The Committee adjourned at 1.52pm until a date to be confirmed.

### **MINUTES OF MEETING NO 21**

1.07pm, 17 May 2022

Parkes Room

#### **Members present**

Mrs Pavey, Mr Clancy, Ms Gibbons, Mrs Overall, Mr Harris, Ms Doyle, Ms Leong

#### **Officers present**

Helen Minnican, Rohan Tyler, Dora Oravec, Amy Pond, Nathalie Pinson

### **1. Committee membership**

The Clerk opened the meeting and read the following extract from the Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings.

Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings, no 134, entry no 17(3):

Nichole Lorraine Overall and Melinda Jane Pavey be appointed to serve on the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services in place of Wendy Elizabeth Lindsay and Dugald William Saunders, discharged.

### **2. Election of Chair**

There being a vacancy in the office of Chair of the Committee, the Clerk called for nominations for the office of Chair.

Ms Leong nominated herself as Chair.

Mr Clancy nominated Mrs Pavey as Chair.

There being two nominations the question was put that Ms Leong be elected Chair of the Committee.

The Committee divided.

Ayes 2 [Ms Doyle, Ms Leong]

Noes 4 [Mr Clancy, Ms Gibbons, Mrs Overall, Mrs Pavey]

Question resolved in the negative.

The question was put that Mrs Pavey be elected Chair of the Committee.

There being no 'Noes', the question was resolved in the affirmative.

The Clerk declared Mrs Pavey to be the Chair.

The Clerk handed the meeting over to the Chair to preside.

### **3. Election of Deputy Chair**

There being a vacancy in the office of Deputy Chair of the Committee, the Chair called for nominations for the office of Deputy Chair.

Ms Gibbons nominated Mr Clancy as Deputy Chair, seconded by Mrs Pavey.

No further nominations were received. There being only one nomination, the Chair declared Mr Clancy to be the Deputy Chair.

### **4. Confirmation of minutes**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Clancy: That the minutes of the meeting of 31 March 2022 be confirmed.

### **5. Correspondence**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Chair of the Queensland Parliament's Community Support and Services Committee, dated 5 April, seeking a meeting with the Community Services Committee as part of a study tour to NSW on 7 and 8 June.

Discussion ensued.

### **6. Inquiry into improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities**

### **6.1. Submissions received**

The Committee noted the receipt of submissions 1, 2 and 3.

### **6.2. Stakeholder list and closing date for submissions**

The Committee discussed the stakeholder list and the closing date for submissions.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Doyle, seconded by Mrs Overall: That the Chair writes to the agreed list of stakeholders, previously circulated to the Committee, seeking their submissions.

The Committee agreed to extend the closing date for submissions to 17 June 2022.

### **6.3. Translating terms of reference**

The Committee discussed translating the terms of reference into community languages.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Gibbons, seconded by Mr Clancy: That the Committee seeks the Speaker's approval for funding to translate the terms of reference for the inquiry into crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities into the ten most widely spoken community languages after English.

## **7. General business**

Ms Leong suggested that the translated inquiry terms of reference be circulated to CALD communities through Multicultural NSW's networks.

## **MINUTES OF MEETING NO 22**

10.31am, 8 August 2022

Room 1136 and videoconference

### **Members present**

Mrs Pavey (Chair), Mr Harris, Ms Leong, Ms Doyle

Via videoconference: Mr Clancy (Deputy Chair), Ms Gibbons, Mrs Overall

### **Officers present**

Rohan Tyler, Dora Oravec, Amy Pond, Nathalie Pinson, Nicolle Gill

### **1. Video recording of meeting**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded by Ms Doyle: That the video of the meeting be recorded for the purposes of committee staff preparing the minutes, with the recording being deleted once the minutes are finalised.

### **2. Confirmation of minutes**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded by Ms Doyle: That the minutes of the meeting of 17 May 2022 be confirmed.

3. \*\*\*

4. \*\*\*

## **5. Inquiry into improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities**

### **5.1. Publishing submissions**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded by Mr Clancy:

- That the Committee publishes submissions 1 to 2, 4 to 22, and 24 to 32 in full.

- That the Committee publishes submission 3 with the phone number and name in the photograph on page 4 redacted.
- That the Committee publishes submission 23 with the name, position and signature on page 3 redacted.

## **5.2. Public hearing dates and witness list**

The Committee discussed hearing arrangements and the witnesses to invite to public hearings. The Committee asked staff to circulate an amended draft list of witnesses before the 16 August public hearing.

## **6. Next meeting**

The meeting adjourned at 11.27am until 16 August at 9.30am.

## **MINUTES OF MEETING NO 23**

9.28am, 16 August 2022

Jubilee Room and videoconference

### **Members present**

Mrs Pavey (Chair), Mr Harris, Ms Leong, Ms Gibbons

Via videoconference: Mrs Overall, Ms Doyle

### **Officers present**

Rohan Tyler, Dora Oravec, Amy Pond, Nathalie Pinson, Nicolle Gill

## **1. Apologies**

Mr Clancy

## **2. Deliberative meeting**

### **2.1. Public hearing dates and witness list**

The Committee noted the updated list of suggested witnesses for the public hearings.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded by Ms Overall: That the Committee invites the listed witnesses to give evidence at public hearings to be held on 16 August and 12 September.

### **2.2. Media orders**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded by Ms Overall: That the Committee authorises the audio-visual recording, photography and broadcasting of the public hearing on 16 August 2022, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly's guidelines for the coverage of proceedings for parliamentary committees administered by the Legislative Assembly.

### **2.3. Answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions**

Resolved on the motion of Ms Overall, seconded by Mr Harris: That witnesses be requested to return answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions within 1 week of the date on which the questions are forwarded to the witnesses.

## **3. Public hearing - Inquiry into improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities**

The Chair opened the public hearing at 9.37am and made a short opening statement.

Mr Farhad Arian, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, CORE Community Services, was affirmed and examined by videoconference.

Mr John Buraho, Settlement Manager, Multicultural Communities, CORE Community Services, was affirmed and examined by videoconference.

Ms Selina Lee, Marketing & Communications, Manager SydWest Multicultural Services, was sworn and examined.

Ms Eleanor Harris, Acting Manager, Building Resilience for Emergency Responses, NSW Council of Social Service, was sworn and examined by videoconference.

Ms Nemat Kharboutli, Manager, Linking Hearts Service, Muslim Women Australia, was sworn and examined by videoconference.

Mr Anthony Pang, Deputy Chairperson/Secretary, Chinese Australian Services Society Limited, was sworn and examined.

Ms Jane Lu, Executive Officer, Chinese Australian Services Society Limited, was affirmed and examined.

Mr Pang tendered a document.

Ms Erin Wen Ai Chew, National Convener and Co-Founder, Asian Australian Alliance, was affirmed and examined by videoconference.

Ms April Pan, Co-convenor, Canterbury Bankstown Multicultural Interagency, was affirmed and examined.

Dr Archana Voola, Policy Officer, Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, was affirmed and examined.

Mr Nathan Hagarty, Chair of Board, Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, was affirmed and examined.

Mr David Hua, Director, Audio and Languages Content, SBS, was affirmed and examined by videoconference.

Mr Michael Coonan, Head of Government Relations and Regulatory Affairs, SBS, was affirmed and examined by videoconference.

Mr Tim Wark, Manager Community, Partnerships and Population Programs ACON, was affirmed and examined.

Ms Lucy Watson, Policy and Development Officer, ACON, was affirmed and examined.

Mr Wark tendered a copy of ACON's Multicultural Engagement Plan.

Ms Randa Kattan, Chief Executive Officer Arab Council Australia Inc, was affirmed and examined by videoconference.

Ms Yamamah Agah, Group Manager, Newcomers, Settlement and Integration, Settlement Services International, was affirmed and examined by videoconference.

Ms Toni Beauchamp, Social Policy Lead, Settlement Services International, was affirmed and examined by videoconference.

Ms Türkan Aksoy, Secretary Local Government Multicultural Network, was affirmed and examined by videoconference.

The Committee questioned the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 4.04pm.

#### **4. Deliberative meeting**

The Committee commenced a deliberative meeting at 4.05pm.

#### **4.1. Confirmation of minutes**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harris: That the minutes of the meeting of 8 August 2022 be confirmed.

#### **4.2. Report provided by Albury Wodonga Multicultural Sector Workforce**

The Committee noted the receipt of the Albury-Wodonga Multicultural Community COVID-19 Response Review, provided by the Albury Wodonga Multicultural Sector Workforce.

#### **4.3. Publishing transcript of evidence**

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Gibbons: That the corrected transcript of public evidence given today be authorised for publication and uploaded on the Committee's website.

#### **4.4. Accepting tendered documents**

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Gibbons: That the Committee accepts the documents tendered during the public hearing by the Chinese Australian Services Society and ACON.

#### **5. Next meeting**

The meeting adjourned at 4.06pm until 12 September.

### **MINUTES OF MEETING NO 24**

9.59am, 17 October 2022

Macquarie Room and videoconference

#### **Members present**

Mrs Pavey (Chair), Mr Harris, Ms Leong, Mrs Overall, Ms Doyle

Via videoconference: Mr Clancy, Ms Gibbons

#### **Officers present**

Rohan Tyler, Dora Oravec, Blake Garcia, Nathalie Pinson, Nicolle Gill

### **1. Deliberative meeting**

#### **1.1. Media orders**

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong, seconded by Mr Harris: That the Committee authorises the audio-visual recording, photography and broadcasting of the public hearing on 17 October 2022, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly's guidelines for the coverage of proceedings for parliamentary committees administered by the Legislative Assembly.

#### **1.2. Answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions**

Resolved on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded by Ms Leong: That witnesses be requested to return answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions within 1 week of the date on which the questions are forwarded to the witnesses.

### **2. Public hearing – Inquiry into improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities**

The Chair opened the public hearing at 10.01am and made a short opening statement.

Distinguished Professor Jim Macnamara, Distinguished Professor of Public Communication and Deputy Dean, Faculty of Science, University of Technology Sydney, was sworn and examined.

Mr Russell Anderson, Chief Executive Officer of the NEMBC and Chief News Director for the Multilingual News Service, was sworn and examined by videoconference.

Mr William Murphy, Deputy Secretary, Customer, Delivery and Transformation, Department of Customer Service, was affirmed and examined.

Mr Anthony Cooke APM, Assistant Commissioner, Commander, Central Metropolitan Region, New South Wales Police Force, was sworn and examined.

Mr Joseph La Posta, Chief Executive Officer, Multicultural NSW, was sworn and examined.

Dr Kerry Chant AO PSM, Deputy Secretary Population and Public Health, and Chief Health Officer, NSW Health, was affirmed and examined.

Ms Amanda Stephinson, Director, Public Health (COVID-19) Communications, NSW Ministry of Health, was sworn and examined.

The Committee questioned the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 12.10pm.

### **3 Deliberative meeting**

The Committee commenced a deliberative meeting at 12.11pm.

#### **3.1. Publishing answers to question on notice**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harris: That the Committee publishes answers to questions on notice received from:

- NCOSS
- Muslim Women Australia
- ACON.

#### **3.2. Publishing transcript of evidence**

Resolved on the motion of Ms Doyle: That the corrected transcript of public evidence given today be authorised for publication and uploaded on the Committee's website.

#### **3.3. \*\*\***

#### **3.4. Confirmation of minutes**

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Doyle: That the minutes of the meeting of 16 August 2022 be confirmed.

#### **3.5. Publishing submission**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harris: That the Committee publishes submission 33 in full.

### **4. Next meeting**

The meeting adjourned at 12.12pm until a date to be confirmed.

### **UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF MEETING NO 25**

2.05pm, 8 December 2022

Via videoconference

#### **Members present**

Mrs Pavey (Chair), Mr Harris, Ms Leong, Mr Clancy, Ms Gibbons

#### **Officers present**



Rohan Tyler, Dora Oravec, Blake Garcia, Nathalie Pinson, Nicolle Gill

## **1. Apologies**

Mrs Overall, Ms Doyle

## **2. Resolution permitting recording of video meeting**

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Gibbons: That the Committee agrees to record the meeting for the purposes of committee staff preparing the minutes and report amendments, and that the recording be deleted when the report is tabled.

## **3. Confirmation of minutes**

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Gibbons: That the minutes of the meeting of 17 October 2022 be confirmed.

## **4. \*\*\***

## **5. Inquiry into improving crisis communications to CALD communities**

### **5.1. Publishing revised submission**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Clancy: That the Committee publishes the revised version of submission 7 in full.

### **5.2. Publishing answers to question on notice**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Clancy: That the responses to questions on notice from NSW Health and NSW Police be published on the Committee's webpage.

### **5.3. Consideration of Chair's draft report**

The Committee agreed to consider the report by going through the amendments proposed by Ms Leong.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong, seconded by Mr Clancy: That a new paragraph be inserted under the heading 'CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need to be involved in crisis preparation and communication' on page v to read:

Whilst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were not explicitly referred to in the scope of this inquiry, some recommendations have been made as certain submissions reflected a clear need to ensure involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations in crisis communications for communities.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong, seconded by Mr Harris: That a new paragraph be inserted under the heading 'Racism and discrimination increased during the pandemic' on page viii to read:

We acknowledge the racism and the various difficulties, including access to accurate health information and media vilification, which were experienced by Chinese Australians, Asian Australians and members of CALD communities in the 12 LGAs of concern.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Gibbons: That the second paragraph under the heading 'Racism and discrimination increased during the pandemic' on page viii be amended by omitting 'There were perceptions of discrimination in the Government's approach to managing COVID-19.' and inserting instead 'Some communities felt there was discrimination in the Government's approach to managing COVID-19.'

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Gibbons: That recommendation 1 be amended by inserting ', and continues to encourage diversity in leadership and staff roles in government agencies.' at the end of the recommendation.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Clancy: That recommendation 2 be amended by omitting 'That the NSW Government consults with CALD community organisations on how it can support the sector to communicate effectively with CALD communities during crises, including through additional funding and capacity building.' and inserting instead 'That the NSW Government consults with CALD community organisations on how it can support the sector to communicate effectively with CALD communities during crises, including through additional funding, consideration of crisis grants, and capacity building.'

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong: That recommendation 6 be amended by omitting 'That the NSW Government reviews funding for community and multilingual broadcast media, to ensure that broadcasters are adequately funded to provide information to CALD communities, particularly during crises.' and inserting instead 'That the NSW Government increases funding for community and multilingual broadcast media, to ensure that broadcasters are adequately resourced to provide crisis information to CALD communities.'

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Gibbons: That the following paragraphs be inserted after case study 3 on page 8:

Despite best intentions, there were some unintended consequences in how the Government's targeted COVID-19 strategies were received by communities in the 12 LGAs of concern. The quotes below represent examples of these unintended consequences.

I think just based on our experience late last year of what happened, the restrictions, the way they occurred, the consistent restrictions, really created a massive breakdown in trust, if you like. Particularly when it came to particular areas like Bankstown, Lakemba, places like that, where it's clear they are all besieged areas. They've had the law-and-order approach for so many decades. Historically, it's been like that for a long time, so they're quite easy to pick on.

Having the police on the ground, having the police part of the press conference, if you like, having the boots on the ground in terms of the army, although they were knocking on doors and helping people, that's not what people see. People do see that it's extremely – very much it's discriminatory and it's racist.

Going back to the point of having that very negative terminology or sending the police and defence force to police the community, not just their presence but what we were hearing on the ground was also their attitude and behaviour as well, really triggered a lot of trauma and didn't help getting the community together.

It certainly feels over the last 10 or so years that, with things like the airport, Western Sydney University and a whole bunch of other institutions, we were moving on from that stigma. But with a couple of very quick decisions by the Government and the way it was spun by the media, again there was the tale of two Sydneys. We're back where we started from, trying to overcome this stigma of what it is to be a westie and all the connotations associated with it.

These examples illustrate the importance of trust. They also highlight the impacts of breaches of trust between authorities and CALD communities, including potentially undermining the effectiveness of the Government's strategies.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong: That a new paragraph be inserted after the last paragraph under the heading 'Increasing CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community involvement in crisis preparation and communication' on page 10 to read:

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were not the focus of this inquiry, it is recognised that this is a particularly targeted community and henceforth has been included in the report.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong, seconded by Mr Clancy: That a new bullet point be inserted in the seventh paragraph under the heading 'Co-designing communications with CALD communities' on page 19 to read:

The need for nuanced, culturally appropriate language in crisis messaging. For example, terms like 'take up arms' and 'get your jabs' do not translate well into Arabic.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong, seconded by Ms Gibbons: That the first sentence of the fourth paragraph under the heading 'Government engagement with CALD community groups and networks during COVID-19' on page 22 be amended by omitting 'We heard that community liaison officers in frontline services provided vital language support to CALD communities.' and inserting instead 'The NSW Government submission stated that community liaison officers in frontline services provided vital language support to CALD communities.'

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong, seconded by Ms Gibbons: That a new bullet point be inserted in the second paragraph under the heading 'Crisis communications delivered through a range of channels' on page 24 to read:

CALD specific media and community leaders and groups with established relationships of trust in the community. The messenger is important as well as the message itself.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong, seconded by Mr Clancy: That a new paragraph be inserted after the fourth paragraph under the heading 'Crisis communications delivered through a range of channels' on page 25 to read:

We heard that children and young people from CALD communities had additional responsibilities during the pandemic, including supporting the learning of younger siblings, additional caring and home duties, navigating online literacy, and acting as interpreters for family members.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong, seconded by Mr Harris: That a new paragraph be inserted before the first paragraph under the heading 'A crisis communications strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' on page 27 to read:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were not explicitly referred to in the scope of this inquiry, however some recommendations have been made as certain submissions reflected a clear need to ensure involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations in crisis communications for communities.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong: That a new paragraph be inserted after the first paragraph under the heading 'Funding for community and multilingual broadcast media' on page 30 to read:

We heard that CALD communities experienced challenges accessing accurate health information from overseas media. Ms Randa Kattan, Chief Executive Officer of Arab Council Australia, advised that members of the community were sourcing information from overseas and interstate and sharing this information with their friends and families. This resulted in confusion stemming from the discrepancies 'between the laws that applied in New South Wales and those from overseas and interstate'.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong, seconded by Mr Clancy: That a new recommendation be inserted after the heading 'Clearer processes for reporting racism and discrimination and a national anti-racism framework' on page 39 to read:

That the NSW Government reviews current pathways for reporting or making complaints of discrimination and racism, with a view to improving these avenues and preventing racism and discrimination in society.

Ms Leong moved: That a new recommendation be inserted on page 32 to read:

That the NSW Government makes a statement of acknowledgement to Chinese Australians, Asian Australians and communities impacted in the 12 'LGAs of concern', recognising the increase in racism and discrimination towards CALD communities during the pandemic and the trauma, fear and negative health consequences this had on them.

Question put.

The Committee divided.

Ayes 1 [Ms Leong]

Noes 4 [Mrs Pavey, Mr Clancy, Ms Gibbons, Mr Harris]

Question negated.

Ms Leong moved: That a new recommendation be inserted on page 39 to read:

That the NSW Government commit to support Anti-Racism initiatives nationally and in NSW.

Question put.

The Committee divided.

Ayes 1 [Ms Leong]

Noes 4 [Mrs Pavey, Mr Clancy, Ms Gibbons, Mr Harris]

Question negated.

The Committee agreed that Committee staff would circulate a version of the report with the amendments agreed to during the meeting highlighted.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Gibbons:

- That the draft report, as amended, be the report of the Committee and that it be signed by the Chair and presented to the House.
- That the Chair and Committee staff be permitted to correct stylistic, typographical and grammatical errors.
- That, once tabled, the report be posted on the Committee's webpage.

## **6. General business**

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Leong: That the Committee seeks the Speaker's approval for funding to translate the findings and recommendations in the report on improving crisis communications to CALD communities into the ten most widely spoken languages in NSW.

## **7. Next meeting**

The meeting adjourned at 3.12pm until a date to be confirmed.