

**Submission  
No 1**

**IMPROVING CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS TO CULTURALLY AND  
LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**

**Name:** Mr Fulin Yan

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**Mr Fulin Yan**

Member of the Australian Labor Party - NSW Branch

**Re: Improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities**

Dear Honourable Member of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services,

感谢您有机会为本次调查做出贡献。这个询问对我个人来说意义重大。我来自文化和语言多元化的背景。

Members of this committee, my opening remarks was in Mandarin, my mother tongue. This inquiry holds very dear to my heart. Though some people, like myself can access information and support in the language I need rather efficiently, many can't. To say the past 3 years has been challenging is truly an understatement. With all that's going on in our state, in Australia and across the world is unprecedented.

Many people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds face hurdles after hurdles when needing support. I speak from experience, people in my own family struggled to understand information provided to them over the pandemic. This turns people susceptible to misinformation spread via friends and family or via unreliable sources of media. For example, over the past 3 years certain members of the chinese language media portrayed COVID-19 as a biological weapon deployed by the west. Those same media sources also portrayed lifesaving vaccines as posions that the Government is imposing. Certainly that's not all sources of information in the chinese language. But it is always unacceptable to use the weaknesses of emergency response as a political propropanda. Information in languages other than English, regrettably, has a significantly high rate to be misinformation.

Many other young people from migrant backgrounds like myself find the need to explain to the elderly grandparents and to debunk misinformation in crisis communication.

There are many reasons why people from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background struggle to get information in times of crisis. Some of the reasons include:

- Lack of access to information due to language barriers
- Lack of understanding of the Australian legal and social systems
- Lack of awareness of available services and support
- Fear of discrimination or violence
- Mistrust of authorities

**Language Barriers to Accessing Information for CALD communities**

The barriers to accessing information during times of crisis and pandemics can be significant for CALD communities. With language and cultural differences, it can be difficult for these communities to find accurate and timely information about what is happening and what they need



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to do to protect themselves. This can lead to confusion and anxiety, and ultimately, can put people at risk.

There are a number of ways that language barriers can impact accessing information during times of crisis and pandemics. One of the most significant barriers is that CALD communities may not have access to information in their own language. This can make it difficult to understand what is happening and to follow instructions about what to do. Additionally, CALD communities may not be able to access information through traditional channels, such as the news or social media, as these may not be available in their language. This can further isolate these communities and make it difficult to get accurate information.

Another significant barrier is that CALD communities may not have the same level of understanding of the health system and services as those who speak English. This can make it difficult to know where to go for help or how to access services. Additionally, CALD communities may not be aware of the early warning signs of a crisis or pandemic, which can lead to delays in seeking medical help.

Finally, CALD communities may experience discrimination and stigma during times of crisis and pandemics. This can make them less likely to seek help or information, as they may fear that they will be treated differently or that they will not be believed. This can further isolate these communities and make it difficult to get accurate information and assistance.

The impact of language barriers on accessing information during times of crisis and pandemics can be significant for CALD communities. These barriers can make it difficult to understand what is happening, follow instructions, and seek help. This can ultimately put people at risk and make it difficult for CALD communities to get the assistance and support they need.

## **Lack of Understanding on the Australian Legal and Social Systems**

In Australia, a high number of refugees and migrants come from countries with little or no understanding of the Australian legal and social systems. In times of crisis, such as the outbreak of COVID-19, this lack of understanding can have devastating consequences.

Refugees and migrants may not be aware of where to go for help or how to access essential services. They may also be reluctant to seek help for fear of being deported or detained. This can lead to them becoming isolated and vulnerable to exploitation.

In addition, CALD communities may not be familiar with Australia's health system and may be reluctant to seek medical help for fear of being quarantined. This can lead to serious health problems, such as delayed diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases.



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The lack of understanding of the Australian legal and social systems can also lead to CALD communities being marginalised and discriminated against. This can make it difficult for them to find employment, access housing and get an education.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has highlighted the need for better information and support for CALD communities in times of crisis. The Government has a responsibility to ensure that all Australians have access to accurate and up-to-date information about the legal and social systems, and that they are provided with adequate support to navigate these systems.

### **Lack of awareness of available services and support**

The outbreak of COVID-19 has disproportionately affected CALD communities around the world. In countries like Australia, the lack of awareness of available services and support has left many CALD residents feeling isolated and alone.

The lack of awareness of available services and support is compounded by the fact that many CALD residents are not familiar with the Australian health care system. This can lead to difficulty in accessing care and treatment during times of need.

The language barrier is another significant barrier for CALD communities during times of crisis. Many CALD residents do not speak English as a first language, making it difficult to communicate with healthcare providers and navigate the complex healthcare system.

The lack of awareness of available services and support can also lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. CALD communities often live in culturally and linguistically isolated pockets within society. This isolation can be magnified during times of crisis when people are not able to access the social and emotional support they need.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the severe lack of awareness of available services and support for CALD communities. The lack of awareness and understanding of the Australian health care system has led to many CALD residents feeling isolated, alone and frightened during this time.

It is essential that service providers, health care professionals and policymakers work together to improve the awareness of available services and support for CALD communities. Only by working together can we ensure that CALD residents are able to access the care and support they need during times of crisis.

### **Fear of Discrimination**

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in discrimination and violence against CALD communities. This is due to the fact that these communities are often seen as being responsible for the spread of the virus. This has led to CALD communities being ostracised and excluded from



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many aspects of society. This has had a negative impact on the mental health of members of these communities, as well as their ability to access information about the pandemic.

Discrimination against CALD communities has been evident in a number of ways during the pandemic. There have been reports of racist abuse directed at Asian Australians, as well as discrimination against Muslims. These communities have been scapegoated by some people who are looking for someone to blame for the pandemic. This has led to an increase in hate crimes against these groups.

The fear of discrimination or violence has also had an impact on CALD communities' ability to access information about the pandemic. This is because many people from these communities are reluctant to seek help from authorities or to access services, for fear of being targeted. This has made it difficult for these communities to get the information and support they need to deal with the pandemic.

The fear of discrimination or violence has also made it difficult for CALD communities to participate in the research and development of a vaccine for COVID-19. This is because many people from these communities are reluctant to participate in clinical trials, for fear of being turned away or treated poorly. This has led to a lack of representative data from these groups, which could impact the effectiveness of any vaccine that is developed.

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## **Mistrust in Government**

There is a long history of mistrust between many CALD communities and government authorities. This mistrust has been further deepened by the way in which information has been handled during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mistrust in government can have a number of impacts on CALD communities in times of crisis. One of the most significant is the way it can lead to people feeling excluded and marginalised. This can lead to a feeling of powerlessness and mistrust in government institutions.



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This mistrust can also lead to CALD communities feeling hopeless and believing that they have no recourse or opportunity to improve their situation. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this has led to some CALD communities feeling that they are being unfairly scapegoated and that the government is not doing enough to protect them.

Mistrust in government can also impact CALD communities by preventing them from accessing information that could be vital in a time of crisis. This is particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, where accurate and up-to-date information is essential in order to make informed decisions about how to protect oneself and one's family.

Mistrust in government can also have a negative impact on CALD communities by causing them to self-isolate and withdraw from mainstream society. This can lead to further feelings of exclusion and powerlessness.

In conclusion, mistrust in government can have a range of negative impacts on CALD communities in times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of accurate and up-to-date information, as well as the need for inclusive and culturally-sensitive approaches from government authorities.

## How We Have Failed in the Past 3 Years

NSW's multicultural communities have been failed by the state government over the past three years. This is evident in the way the state government has handled bushfires, the COVID-19 pandemic, and floods.

### **Bushfires**

In 2019, bushfires ravaged NSW, causing damage to properties and loss of life. The state government's response to the bushfires was inadequate, with many people from multicultural backgrounds left feeling unsupported and underserved.

There was a lack of bilingual support for those who did not speak English as their first language, which made it difficult for people to access information about the fires and how to best protect themselves.

There was also a lack of cultural sensitivity in the way the bushfires were handled. For example, some Indigenous communities were not consulted about the best way to manage the fires on their land. This led to a feeling of powerlessness and frustration among many Indigenous people.

The state government also failed to provide adequate support to bushfire-affected communities in the aftermath of the fires. This was particularly evident in the way they handled insurance claims, with many people from multicultural backgrounds finding it difficult to navigate the process.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic**



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The state government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has also been inadequate, with many people from multicultural backgrounds feeling left behind.

There has been a lack of clear and concise information about the pandemic, which has made it difficult for people to understand the risks and how to best protect themselves.

There has also been a lack of support for those who have been directly affected by the pandemic, such as those who have lost their jobs or have fallen ill.

The state government has also been slow to roll out support measures such as the JobKeeper allowance, which has left many people struggling to make ends meet.

### **Floods**

In 2022, floods affected many parts of NSW, causing damage to properties and infrastructure. The state government's response to the floods was again inadequate, with many people from multicultural backgrounds feeling let down.

There was a lack of information and support available for those who were affected by the floods, which made it difficult for people to know where to turn for help.

There was also a lack of coordination between different government agencies, which made it difficult for people to get the assistance they needed.

The state government also failed to provide adequate financial assistance to those who lost their homes or businesses in the floods. This left many people struggling to rebuild their lives.

Overall, the state government has failed to meet the needs of NSW's multicultural communities over the past three years. This is evident in the way they have handled bushfires, the COVID-19 pandemic, and floods.

If the state government does not address the needs of multicultural communities, it is likely that they will continue to feel marginalized and underserved. This could have a significant impact on community cohesion and social cohesion in NSW.

### **How We Can Overcome the Challenges**

There are a number of ways in which the government can better deliver information to CALD communities in times of crisis to overcome language barriers, lack of understanding of the Australian legal and social systems, lack of awareness of the support available, fear of discrimination, and mistrust in government.

**Labor**



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One way the government can overcome these barriers is by establishing a dedicated multicultural communications unit within the relevant department or ministry. This unit would be responsible for developing and implementing communications strategies specifically targeted at CALD communities. The unit would also be responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders within these communities, such as faith leaders, community groups, and media outlets.

Another way the government can better deliver information to CALD communities is by increasing its use of social media and other digital channels. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, are increasingly being used as a means of communication by CALD communities. The government should take advantage of this by using these platforms to disseminate information about services, support, and advice in times of crisis.

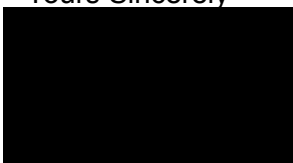
Additionally, the government should consider establishing translated versions of key websites and online resources. This would ensure that CALD communities have access to accurate and up-to-date information in their own language.

Finally, the government should provide funding for CALD-specific crisis support and advice services. These services would be staffed by people who are familiar with the needs and concerns of CALD communities. They would be able to provide advice and support in times of crisis, and act as a bridge between the community and the government.

By taking these steps, the government can overcome the barriers to communication that often exist between it and CALD communities. This would ensure that these communities are better informed and supported during times of crisis.

I appreciate this opportunity to submit to an inquiry that's very dear to me. If you do wish any further information from me, please feel free to contact me. If you need my appearance in front of this committee for hearings, I will make myself available.

Yours Sincerely



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