

**Submission
No 8**

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

Organisation: Anglicare North Coast

Date Received: 14 June 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the inquiry for improving communications to CALD communities.

Anglicare North Coast works with refugee & migrant men and women in the Coffs Harbour LGA. In the last 3 years we have experienced unprecedented times of crisis including fires, covid-19 pandemic, and flood.

In our experience, we have witnessed the most vulnerable CALD communities left extremely isolated and disadvantaged. Information distribution and support to these communities has been an enormous challenge, especially in times of crisis.

Barriers have included:

- Lack of digital skills
- Lack of technology
- Limited access to digital technology and devices e.g., one device for a family of 6 or more or people trying to study on their phones.
- Incorrect information coming via social media from other countries
- People not knowing where to go for information
- People not understanding information
- Information being too verbose and inaccessible
- No literacy skills – unable to read first language
- Limited verbal information
- Difficulty in accessing interpreters

During Covid, the distribution of information required Anglicare workers to talk individually to clients using TIS to ensure people had the correct information regarding Covid rules and regulations. One worker reported that an Afghani client and her 4 children didn't think they were allowed to leave their house during state lockdowns and had been inside for 4 days with very little food supplies and resources. Written information in language didn't help in this instance, as the female head of household was illiterate in her first language, and she was unable to read or understand English.

Family and domestic violence incidents increased during the lockdowns and highlighted the lack of information for women seeking refuge and support. One young Yazidi client was unaware she was allowed to leave to leave her house and continued to stay in an unsafe situation. Women with no education in their first language and no English, are some of the most vulnerable people we support. Spoken information is essential for this demographic and was not easily accessible in the recent events.

In response to this lack of verbal information, a group of volunteers formed to create MICO (Multilingual Info Co-Op) supported by STARTTS, Red Cross and Multicultural Network in Coffs Harbour. This group commenced to improve communication to local CALD communities. Please see link below.

[Lockdown tests Coffs language translation service for CALD communities – News Of The Area](#)

CALD communities with rare, and common, languages were able to access information via social media through trusted organisation websites and Facebook private groups. This was an essential method of communication and could be replicated in other part of Australia in time of crisis. MICO empowers community members to make sure people understand information in language. It would also be recommended to make these positions paid or supported in some capacity.

Improved access to technology such as laptops would also be recommended. Some members of the CALD community were trying to study on their phones and then share their phone with other family members. During the state lockdowns, CALD community members struggled to access technology and children couldn't access online learning. Counselling and emergency relief became an online resource, that once again, disadvantaged people without technology and skills to navigate websites and online forms.

Working through the recent Covid crisis with the CALD community emphasised the lack of information, and digital skills for this community. With immediate verbal communication for all language groups, accessible digital resources, and community members looking out for each other, I believe communication during a crisis could be improved.

Kind regards,



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