

**Submission  
No 12**

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

**Organisation:** Carers NSW

**Date Received:** 16 June 2022

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Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services  
NSW Parliament House  
6 Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Carers NSW thanks the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services for the opportunity to provide a submission in response to its inquiry into improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This submission will highlight the unique experiences and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) carers in crises. It will also draw on the Carers NSW *CALD carer engagement toolkit*, co-developed with CALD carers and organisations, to provide a range of best practice principles for improving communication with CALD carers, which should be considered in crises, when information needs are most pertinent.

Carers NSW is the peak non-government organisation for carers in New South Wales (NSW). A carer is any individual who provides care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug and/or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail. Carers NSW is part of the National Carer Network and a member of Carers Australia. Our vision is an Australia that values and supports all carers, and our goals are to:

- Be a leading carer organisation in which carers have confidence
- Actively promote carer recognition and support
- Actively support carers to navigate a changing service landscape that will be characterised by ongoing policy reform
- Promote connected community experiences and opportunities for carers that are inclusive of diverse carer groups
- Lead and advocate for carer-specific and carer-inclusive policy making, research and service delivery
- Continue to be a quality-driven, responsive and carer-focused organisation.

Thank you for accepting our submission. For further information, please contact Melissa Docker, Senior Policy and Development Officer at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
Elena Katrakis  
CEO  
Carers NSW

## Background

Residents across New South Wales (NSW) have experienced rolling crises for more than two years now, including the COVID-19 pandemic, bushfires and floods. Clear and timely information from trusted sources is key to enabling people to respond and adapt in times of crisis. However, Carers NSW has heard from carers that throughout recent crises, rapid policy change has made media commentary confusing, and information quickly becomes out of date, creating confusion and associated distress for many carers. For culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) carers, understanding NSW Government rules and recommendations has been even more challenging. Anecdotally, Carers NSW has heard from CALD carers and service providers that due to limited and delayed communication in language, many members of CALD communities have had to rely on family members and friends, as well as social media for information, often resulting in misinformation or unintended breaches of public health directives. This inability to access key information in a timely manner may have in turn placed carers and those they care at a disadvantage and at greater risk in emergency or crisis situations.

Carers NSW commends the NSW Government on their work throughout the pandemic to simplify and streamline information, especially in regards to COVID-19 social distancing measures. Carers NSW also commends the NSW Government on taking actions to improve communication with CALD communities, including the use of AUSLAN interpreters in all public addresses, translating resources into a range of community languages and increased communication channels with trusted leaders and community members in CALD communities. While recent initiatives have improved communication with CALD communities in relation to crises, Carers NSW welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services on further ways to improve crisis communication to CALD communities.

## Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) carers in NSW

In NSW there are more than 850,000 carers. Approximately one in five were born in a country where English is not the main language. More than one in ten carers in NSW mainly speak a language other than English at home.<sup>1</sup> The experiences of carers from CALD backgrounds can be influenced by their cultural values, migration histories, exposure to trauma, educational opportunities, literacy levels and the availability of culturally appropriate services in their local area.

Carers from CALD backgrounds are more likely to be 'hidden carers' who do not recognise themselves as carers, or are not recognised by others, often as a result of cultural expectations and practices regarding caring. It is important to be aware of the possible impacts of cultural values and expectations, including stigma and roles within the family, while also being sensitive to the diversity within CALD communities and the unique life experiences of each carer.

Carers from CALD backgrounds are also more likely than other carers to have experienced barriers to accessing information and services, especially in crises, due to factors such as language, disconnection from mainstream communication channels, and a lack of awareness of the rights and responsibilities of service users. It is therefore important for government departments and agencies and community organisations to tailor their engagement approach to address any barriers which may exist for members of the CALD communities they are seeking to engage with.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019) *Table Builder: Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2018*.

## Key principles for engaging and communicating with CALD communities

The Carers NSW Policy and Research team developed the CALD carer engagement toolkit<sup>2</sup> (the toolkit) between 2018 and 2020 in consultation with the Carers NSW Diversity Group, a network of CALD sector experts and CALD Carer Representatives. The toolkit draws on the successful delivery of a series of research focus groups with CALD carers to accompany the rollout of the Carers NSW 2018 Carer Survey.<sup>3</sup>

While the focus of the toolkit is on increasing the involvement of CALD carers in research, consultation and capacity building activities, the key principles for engaging CALD carers also apply to the provision of information, services and support to CALD carers and communities.

The toolkit highlights that ethical and effective engagement and communication with CALD communities is underpinned by the following principles:

- **Relationships based on trust and rapport:** Engaging with CALD communities effectively requires investing time in building relationships based on trust, including outside periods of crisis. This includes identifying and engaging community representatives, arranging face-to-face meetings, demonstrating respect, and ensuring the relationship is mutually beneficial. Developing these ongoing relationships is key to enabling timely communication in crises.
- **Understanding the community:** This includes desktop research and consultation with community representatives to enhance understanding of community demographics, migration experiences, cultural norms and expectations and cultural influences on caring roles, as well as an appreciation of the 'diversity within diversity' of each CALD community.
- **Continual learning and self-awareness:** Professional engagement with any vulnerable group requires an attitude of continual learning and growth, self-reflection and a willingness to have our assumptions challenged. This includes an appreciation that each of us comes with our own cultural values, norms and expectations.
- **Ethical commitment:** A fundamental commitment to respecting others, promoting human rights and pursuing fairness.

## Interpreting and translating

Translating materials and working with interpreters is often critical to successfully engaging with CALD communities. However, these tools are not enough on their own to enable effective engagement; they must be used alongside culturally appropriate outreach, consultation and building respectful relationships. It is also important to carefully consider how and when to use translated materials and/or interpreters to ensure the approach will be effective and to maximise the use of resources.

Research emerging from COVID-19 has demonstrated that while translating key communication materials is important, the most effective way of communicating health information with CALD communities is through "communities of trust", drawing on trusted and respected members of the community who can sensitively and accurately adapt messages to the needs of their community.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Carers NSW (2021). Engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse carers: A guide, available online at: [https://www.carersnsw.org.au/uploads/main/Files/5.About-us/Our-research/Engaging\\_with\\_CALD\\_carers\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.carersnsw.org.au/uploads/main/Files/5.About-us/Our-research/Engaging_with_CALD_carers_Guide.pdf), viewed 16 June 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Carers NSW (2018). *Focus groups with culturally and linguistically diverse carers in NSW: Summary of findings*, available online at: [https://www.carersnsw.org.au/uploads/main/Files/5.About-us/Our-research/Summary\\_report\\_CALD.pdf](https://www.carersnsw.org.au/uploads/main/Files/5.About-us/Our-research/Summary_report_CALD.pdf), viewed 16 June 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Gerber, L., Wilson, R., Hlavac, J. & Avella, A. (2021), *Developing multilingual communication strategies for CALD communities during the COVID-19 vaccination rollout*, available online at:

## Conclusion

Carers NSW thanks the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services for the opportunity to provide a submission on improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Carers NSW believes that improved crisis communications for CALD communities is likely to ensure the health and safety of CALD carers and the people they care for, as well as reduce distress and support optimal outcomes.