

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

Organisation: Chinese Community Council of Australia (Victorian Chapter) - CCCAV
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CCCAV Submission on Improving Crisis Communications to CALD communities

To:

The Hon Melinda Pavey MP
Committee Chair,
The Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services
communityservices@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Re: Inquiry into improving crisis communications to CALD communities

Dear The Hon Melinda Pavey MP,

This is a submission by the Chinese Community Council of Australia (Victoria Chapter) - **CCCAV** in responding to the request for submissions on improving crisis communications to CALD communities (Ref: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2870#tab-submissions>).

According to the Australian Bureau Statistics (ABS) 2021, 29.1% of Australia's population were born overseas. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the average number of migrant arrivals was 493,000 per year in the past ten years, with the majority (56%) arrived on temporary visas. The 2016 Census of Population and Housing reported that almost half of Australians (45% or 10.6 million) were either born overseas (26% or 6.2 million) or had one or both parents who were born overseas (19% or 4.5 million). Over 300 languages are spoken in Australia, with the majority (73%) of permanent migrants spoke a language other than English at home.

The statistics provide us a good picture of multiculturalism in Australia, inevitably highlighting the complexity of public health communication in the country. In the matters of communicating with the CALD communities, it is important to identify who exactly we are referring to. The ABS defines the CALD population mainly by country of birth, language spoken at home, English proficiency, or other characteristics (year of arrival, parents' country of birth, religious affiliation). It is clear that any effective crisis communication would consider three main factors of the targeted population – (1) heritage, (2) language and (3) spirituality. It is common for crisis communication campaign to focus on addressing the language barriers, e.g., distributing translated materials, providing interpretation services. While the “what” aspect of communication is important, it is crucial to embrace the differences in “how” every culture communicates.

Understanding the concept of high- and low-context communication is fundamental to appreciate cultural diversity in how people convey and interpret information. Note that this takes the form of gradient instead of rigid categorisation. Low context cultures (e.g., North America, Western Europe, Australia) would depend less on the environment of a situation, more on the literal and explicit content of the message to convey meaning. These cultures also tend to value individualism. High-context cultures (e.g., Japan, China, Korea) would rely heavily on non-verbal, shared cultural meanings. These cultures values group membership generally. It is obvious why this cultural knowledge is vital for crisis communication such as a health crisis Covid-19 pandemic situation. High-context cultures communities may consider community wellbeing as a priority over individuals' circumstances whereas low context cultures communities may prioritise matters of privacy and rights over group welfare. The message of an effective health campaign needs to be carefully crafted.

A community-based intervention, which works from a collective and cultural appropriateness lens, is a practical and useful approach to work in collaboration with CALD communities in the matters of crisis communication. For example, the Chinese Community Council of Australia, Victoria Chapter (CCCAV)'s Vaccine Promotion campaign which targeted the Chinese communities was a success due to its strong emphasis on family values and communities' wellbeing. The media distribution was on social media platforms generally used by the Chinese communities.

There is no one-size-fits-all rule when it comes to effective communication with CALD communities. Consistent consultation and collaboration need to be done hand-in-hand with various CALD communities right from the initial design phase to the implementation and outcome evaluation phase. Collaboration opportunities need to be meaningfully expanded to include CALD communities throughout the development of crisis communication plan. More importantly, introduction and expansion of more grants and opportunities ensuring sustainability of the operation of various CALD organisations and the development of community leaders are cornerstone for a solid and continuous partnership with the policy makers.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Kexiou Tan | Deputy Secretary
Chinese Community Council of Australia (Vic)