

**Submission
No 14**

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

Organisation: Asian Australian Alliance

Date Received: 17 June 2022



17 June 2022

Committee on Community Services

Re: Improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Dear Committee Chair The Hon Melinda Pavey MP,

Thank you for reaching out to the Asian Australian Alliance (AAA) to provide input into the *'Improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities'* Committee. Given the recent COVID-19 crisis, and the rise of anti-Chinese hate, there is no time more critical than now to ensure that we are reaching our CALD communities and that we are doing it in a way that is respectful, and all encompassing. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the need to properly communicate and connect with our CALD communities to ensure they aren't being left behind, and

The AAA is pleased to present the below considerations for the Committee to take onboard in future communications to CALD communities, especially during crises, and would welcome any further dialogue on these matters.

a) use of multicultural and CALD community groups and networks to distribute in-language information

- There must be an understanding of cultural sensitivities as well as religious sensitivities with regards to communicating "crisis" style situations.
- There should be a CALD/multicultural steering committee who represents the CALD communities in each locality who understand the needs of the respective communities to guide the process of crisis communication. They would also have the knowledge of who to engage with in each of these communities, and how to disseminate the relevant information efficiently and effectively.

- Government must go beyond their “go-to token” CALD community members and work to understand the community landscape to engage meaningfully and avoid box-ticking engagement.

b) ways to improve channels of communication with CALD communities

- Government must have a comprehensive understanding of the communication platforms used by various communities and know how to use these platforms to reach out, engage and spread awareness to and within the CALD communities.
- The in-language information needs to be professionally translated into the different, relevant languages. For example, language translations need to be nuanced and contextualised with language context consultations conducted with the relevant CALD communities, to ensure there is context and sensitivity in the translation process - not just using translation programs.
- Ensure that there are more avenues of contextually translated information, not only written information - this may include verbal relaying of information, instructional videos, webinars, consultations, etc.

c) addressing racism and discrimination related to crisis communications.

- Currently there exists a lack of cohesive efforts to address racism and discrimination to CALD communities, and this stems from Australia’s lack of acknowledgement that racism is an actual problem. There needs to be a clearer process on submitting complaints of racism when racism and discrimination crisis communications are relayed to the community. There needs to be an action component for this.
- The rise of anti-Asian hate over the last few years as a result of COVID-19 pandemic and the anti-China rhetoric has caused trauma and fear among many Asian Australian communities. There needs to be an avenue to address the collateral that comes out of racism and discrimination related crisis communications. What support services and mental health support services are available? What will the relevant departments do after relaying the communication? What will the Government do? All these questions need to be answered to ensure crisis communications on racism and discrimination have an end point and can yield results.
- There also needs to be sensitivity when talking and/or communicating on this issue as different CALD communities will take information on this issue differently. Consultations must be meaningful, and not just tokenistic, to ensure a

sensitive and contextualised plan can be used in crisis communications to different CALD communities.

It must also be noted that all recommendations must be considered through a holistic Australian lens, rather than an exclusively metropolitan lens. Many new citizens are resettling in areas such as the NSW mid north coast, and considerable CALD populations exist in regional, rural and remote Australia. It should also be noted that within these areas (such as in New England), there is a significant population of growing ethnic diversity, but they are still overshadowed by a wider community who lacks the appropriate cultural awareness/appreciation.

The AAA thanks you for the opportunity to provide feedback to this Committee, and we look forward to further discussion on this pressing issue.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this submission further, you may contact us at info@asianaaustralianalliance.net.

Warm regards,

The Asian Australian Alliance