

Submission
No 128

**INQUIRY INTO EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND
APPROPRIATE DELIVERY OF OUTPATIENT AND
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Organisation: Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra (MCCI)
Date Received: 12 September 2023

While appreciating the close date has recently passed, I am hoping you may accept this brief late submission from a multicultural community perspective. I am the CEO of the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra (MCCI), a non-profit charity and service provider in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven and ACT regions. Our organisation has had a long history of advocacy for migrant and refugee communities. In respect of mental health issues, those efforts began in the late 1970s via partnerships with Lifeline to secure interpreters for migrant counselling services and have continued in a community development context to the present day. More details about our organisation are here: www.mcci.org.au

I would like to draw the Committee's attention to the following:

- For background, the Committee may be interested in a PhD Thesis (2005) by Dr Tilaka Wickramasinghe titled *Out of Mind, out of Sight: Government Policy on Migrant Mental Health, Australia 1960-2000*. It is available from the University of Wollongong.
- In our experience, access to mental health supports for migrant and refugee communities remain problematic. While specialist trauma services such as transcultural mental health and STARTTS are highly valued, we see a great need for ongoing community development work to (1) build CALD community education and understanding about mental health literacy generally, overcoming stigma & resources to explain service access pathways, (2) greater efforts to co-design mainstream mental health services and partnerships with multicultural communities and their organisations, (3) develop a more culturally diverse workforce, including peer workers, in the mental health professions as an important bridge to the community.
- Finally, I'd like to draw the Committee's attention to some work that our organisation has developed with headspace, codesigned with the community, with funding support from our local PHN. These resources have been developed for Arabic, Swahilli, Karenni and Karen languages: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1x_m5hTT5g

With apologies for missing the close date.