



# WELCOME TO THE 'BUILDING CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUPS' RESOURCE

Opening English-speaking groups to people with no or low English proficiency can be challenging, and staff and volunteers may find themselves at a loss when trying to ensure participants feel welcome and included despite linguistic and cultural differences. We hope you find these Help Sheets interesting, inspiring and a catalyst for change.

The Help Sheets are based on interviews and observations conducted with Social Support Group (SSG) in the Eastern Metropolitan Region in the second half of 2016. Interviews were conducted with Access & Support Workers, SSG Coordinators, participants and their families. A Consultation Report outlining these discussions and findings can be found [here](#).

The Help Sheets should also be considered in conjunction with the EMR Alliance

Connecting the Pieces video and resource that explains the unique aspects of diversity, person centred care and the relationship between these approaches.

In the Eastern Metropolitan Region, English-speaking groups who have been able to open their doors to non-English speakers demonstrate the same qualities:

- They see difference as an asset, not a burden
- They are flexible
- They are curious
- They are creative
- They show courage in trying out new approaches

The consultation identified a range of approaches and skills required to work with people with no or low English proficiency, from cross-cultural awareness and cultural

competence to radical changes in the approach to working with older people.

The person-centred approach embodied by the Active Service Model in Victoria was often the impetus to tackling the challenge of diversity. Services must be agile and responsive to the needs of a diverse population.

The person-centred approach, in some cases, led to relinquishing much of the programs' planning and delivery to clients (see Case Study in Help Sheet #8).

The key questions for services are: are language and culture seen as difficulties to somehow accommodate within an English-speaking group, with interpreters, translated resources, cultural events? Or are they another set of individual characteristics, alongside personality, interests, physical capabilities, etc - something that any group

member presents with? Where services position themselves on these questions will define the tools and approaches they put in place to welcome CALD members.

Similarly, SSG coordinators need to understand where their organisation is at before they can plan for their own service delivery: diversity policies, staff and volunteer recruitment and training practices, partnerships, financial allocations... All will play a part in a SSG's ability to show flexibility and creativity to meet the needs of CALD participants.

The Help Sheets include case studies showcasing examples of existing groups in the east that have successfully embraced the challenge of mixing languages and cultures.

We hope you find this resource useful and that your experience welcoming people of diverse cultures into your group is a positive one.

*"There is no such thing as 'No' here, there is no such thing as 'we can't do it'. We have never turned anyone away. There is always a way."*  
- SSG Coordinator

The EMR Alliance is supported by the Victorian Government and supported by the Australian Government Department of Health. Visit the Department of Health website (<http://www.health.gov.au/>) for more information. Disclaimer: Although funding for this resource has been provided by the Australian Government, the material contained herein does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Australian Government.

**GLOSSARY**

- ASM: Active Service Model
- CALD: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
- CHSP: Commonwealth Home Support Programme (formerly HACC)
- EACH: Eastern Access Community Health
- ECCV: Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
- EMR: Eastern Metropolitan Region
- HACC: Home and Community Care
- LOTE: Language other than English
- MAC: My Aged Care
- PAG: Planned Activity Group
- PYP: Program for Younger People
- SSG: Social Support Group (formerly PAG)