



**THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP  
MINISTER FOR AGEING**

Mrs Julia Irwin MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Irwin *Julia*

Thank you for your letter of 11 February 2010 to the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, seeking a response to a petition regarding aged care for the Chinese speaking community. I am responding as the Minister for Ageing.

Each year, new aged care places are made available for allocation in each state and territory, based on their population projections and the current level of aged care provided through the Aged Care Approvals Round (ACAR). The places across aged care planning regions seek to achieve a balance in the provision of services between metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas.

The process for planning the annual allocation and distribution of new aged care places is set out in the *Aged Care Act 1997* (the Act). The objectives of the process are to provide an open and clear planning mechanism and to allocate places in a way that best meets the identified needs of the community, including those people living with special needs.

The current national planning benchmark is set at 113 operational aged care places for every 1,000 persons of the population aged 70 years and over, to be achieved by June 2011. These 113 places comprise 48 high care and 65 low care places.

In each state and territory, Aged Care Planning Advisory Committees (ACPACs) are established to provide advice to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing on how the new places should be distributed among aged care planning regions each year. The Committee considers population projections, data on supply and demand and also input in relation to identified aged care needs and geographic locations from federal, state and local government, community groups, individuals and organisations.

A Committee may identify a geographic location, special needs group and/or key issue as having a particular focus if the Committee believes that the identified need is not being met through existing or planned services. This is then reflected in details published in the regional distribution which form part of the *Essential Guide* for an ACAR.

Community groups, organisations and/or individuals have the opportunity to make submissions to the ACPACs to help them form their recommendations. The identification of a special needs group or groups, indicates that the relevant Committee has identified this category of people as having a particular focus in the ACAR.

Under the Act, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) are identified as one of the prescribed special needs groups. Therefore, applicants in the ACAR are required to demonstrate how they will tailor their service delivery to meet the particular care needs of people from this special needs group. Applicants must also provide evidence of the links they have established with relevant communities and key organisations to facilitate the provision of culturally appropriate aged care in this circumstance.

The 2009-10 ACAR was launched on 30 January 2010, and applications closed on 15 March 2010. In the ACAR, aged care providers in Victoria were able to apply for 1,490 residential places. Of these, a 'pool' of 375 residential aged care places were available to all regions within the state addressing, amongst other matters, the provision of care for people from Chinese, Croatian, Indian, Spanish and Sri Lankan communities. In addition all the metropolitan aged care planning regions identify people from non-English speaking backgrounds as a focus for the 2009-10 ACAR. Providers in Victoria also had the opportunity to apply for 428 Community Aged Care Packages, 338 Extended Aged Care at Home packages and 210 Extended Aged Care at Home Dementia packages. Of these, over 90 per cent focus on, amongst other matters, the provision of care for people from CALD backgrounds.

In addition, the 2009-10 ACAR also offered up to \$160 million under stage two of the Rudd Government's Zero Real Interest Loans initiative. Round one of this initiative sought to encourage proven providers, through the provision of low cost finance, to establish or expand aged care services in areas of high need. Eligibility has been extended to providers seeking to cater to the needs of people from CALD backgrounds. Applicants also had the opportunity in the 2009-10 ACAR to apply for \$41.6 million in capital grants to construct or upgrade residential aged care services.

The Community Partners Program provides grants to individual organisations to promote and facilitate increased and sustained access to information and services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities with significant aged care needs. Under the Community Partners Program, more than \$15 million in funding was made available over three years to successful organisations starting in 2009-10.

As part of the competitive selection process, 11 community organisations targeting the Chinese community around Australia were approved and will receive a combined \$2,120,468 in funding over three years. Of these, five community organisations in Victoria have been funded a total of \$918,120 over three years to provide services such as cultural briefings, referral services and translations, and establish partnerships between aged care providers and communities.

These organisations are:

- Chinese Community Social Services Centre Inc;
- City of Greater Bendigo;
- Geelong Ethnic Communities Council Inc (or Diversitat);
- Gippsland Multicultural Services Inc; and
- Migrant Information Centre Ltd (East Melbourne).

Recently the Government provided terms of reference to the Productivity Commission to conduct an inquiry into the care needs of older Australians over the next 20 years. The terms of reference include reference to meeting the specific needs of groups including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The Commission has been asked to provide its final recommendations by April 2011. Further information about the inquiry can be found on the Productivity Commission's website located at [www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au).

I appreciate you taking the time to write on this matter and trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

**JUSTINE ELLIOT**

**- 6 MAY 2010**