



Geoff Neideck

Housing and Homelessness Group
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
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Delivered by email: info@aihw.gov.au

CC: The Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, JMacklin.MP@aph.gov.au

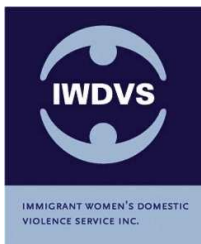
The Hon Chris Bowen, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, chris.bowen.mp@aph.gov.au

The Hon Kate Lundy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Citizenship, senator.lundy@aph.gov.au

The Hon Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, senator.mclucas@aph.gov.au

Dr Penny Allbon, Director Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, info@aihw.gov.au

The Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, mark.butler.mp@aph.gov.au



Wednesday 3 November 2010



Dear Mr Neideck,

As organisations representing large sections of the Australian public we write to express our disappointment about the adequacy of statistical inclusion of people from Non-English Speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds in the national data collection on homelessness to date.

Given that arguably half the Australian population has a non Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Celtic migration background, including second and subsequent generations, inadequate statistical representation is of grave concern to us.

We believe that adequate statistical collection, reporting and analysis of this significant section of society are part of valuing diversity. Without these, there is a potential loss of legitimate resources going to non-English speaking and culturally diverse communities which in the end may exacerbate rather than address or prevent homelessness.

Further we believe that adequate statistics are imperative under the bi-partisan policy of Social Inclusion, just as they are imperative under international obligations.





These include the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), UN Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).



The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) data collection has been unable to reflect the extent and dynamics of service utilisation for people from non-English speaking and culturally diverse background.

This is largely due to the reduction of identification to the country-of-birth indicator in data collection and reporting, unable to capture second or subsequent generations. As a consequence cultural accessibility and competence in service delivery has been undermined as it is not guided by quality data, making benchmarking and monitoring impossible.



Further, inadequate data ultimately leads to a misleading needs analysis with a snow-balling effect of a resource distribution unable to meet cultural and linguistic needs of potential service users.

Data Collection

In order to understand utilisation extent, patterns of utilisation rates and dynamics regarding length of stay, number of support periods, outcomes for people from non English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds, the NPAH needs to collect data on:



- Country of birth of person
- Cultural Background
- Length of Residence in Australia
- Visa status
- Country of birth of person's mother and father (ancestry)
- Language/s spoken as child/at home when growing up
- Language/s spoken now



Further, we believe that the following information is critical to allow the service system to meet the needs of clients and to be monitored on success or shortcomings of outcomes:



- Disability status / Type of assistance required
- Reason for non assistance (to include identification of disability issues e.g. facility unable to accommodate client needs due to accessibility)
- Discharge information (Voluntary, Planned or Involuntary)
- Diet needs/ restrictions
- Cultural/Faith based needs/ restrictions
- Gender needs/ restrictions



Data reporting and access

We believe that regular and detailed reports on utilisation and outcomes for people from non English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds need to be guaranteed and made available on the AIHW website.



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In addition, special reports should be produced regularly on the utilization of people from non English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds and disability.

We strongly believe that representative and advocacy agencies such as ours ought to be viewed as having a legitimate right to access data on the same basis as those providing the accommodation (cost-free) and to be partners in the discussions involved at national and state level.



Inclusive Partnerships

We trust that the Specialist Homelessness Services User Group set up for the consultation on the development of the SHS has representatives from the multicultural community as part of its membership. We would be interested to hear who these representatives are and if we can nominate others.

The AIHW now has an opportunity to significantly improve the homelessness data collection since the new collection under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) is to start in July 2011.

We are looking forward to a formal response on how the AIHW will address our request on the changes to the new data collection.

We also offer our support and national expertise for continuous discussion on refinement of the data.

Please send any correspondence care of NEDA, PO Box 160, Coburg, Victoria 3058.

Yours sincerely,

Sibylle Kaczorek
Executive Officer
National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)



Maya Avdibegovic
Chief Executive Officer
Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service Inc.



Australian Federation of
Disability Organisations

Carmel Guerra
Convenor
Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia)



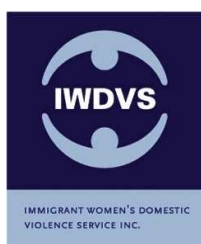


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