

Enhancing access to early years services by
migrant and refugee families

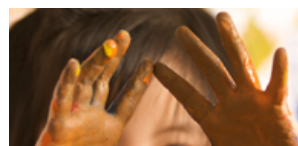
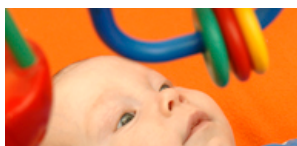
Sue Edwards

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- Victoria is the most culturally diverse of all Australian states, and its increasing diversity presents a number of issues for the Government and the community.
- At the 2006 Census, the total population of Victoria was 4,932,234 persons, of whom:
 - 23.8% (1,173,204) were born overseas in more than 230 countries
 - 43.6% (2,152,279) were either born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas
 - 72.8% (853,966) of those born overseas came from non-main English speaking countries (NMESC)
 - 20.4% (1,007,435) spoke more than 200 languages other than English (LOTE) at home
 - 68.7% (3,390,804) followed more than 120 religions collectively.



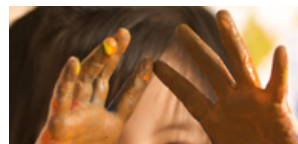
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Legislation

- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*
- *Multicultural Victoria Act 2004*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Multicultural Victoria Amendment Act 2008*

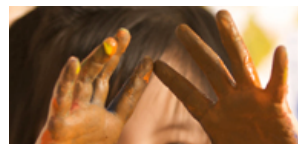
Policies

- *Valuing Cultural Diversity*
- *Multicultural Communications Policy*
- *A Fairer Victoria: Progress and Next Steps*



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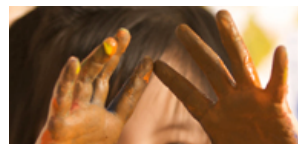
- Low English proficiency was identified in *A Fairer Victoria* as a major barrier to citizens accessing services and taking advantages of opportunities in Victoria.
- Language should not be a barrier for non-English speaking families to access the wide range of information, resources and early childhood services available in Victoria.



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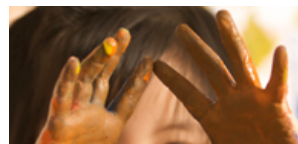
- Victoria's policy clearly states that clients who cannot communicate in written or spoken English must have access to information in their preferred language at critical points, when they need to be:
 - Informed of their rights
 - Give informed consent; and/or
 - Advised of critical information relating to their health and wellbeing and/or participate in decision making related to medical and other human service matters.

Implications for programs?



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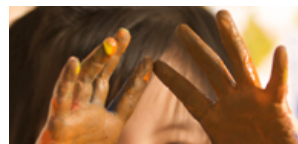
- Enhancing support for CALD families in the crucial early years has been a key policy driver in Victoria for since 2007.
- Victoria's strategic approach to making our early years services more accessible to CALD parents encompasses:
 - Increasing the availability of interpreters to support service providers
 - Developing resources in new formats (audio/visual, cartoon, and in the future mobile phone applications) to help parents with little or no proficiency in any language
 - Promoting the use of plain English in early years' services, and helping interpreters 'interpret' through the development of an Early Years Lexicon
 - Increasing the cultural competency of our early years' services providers



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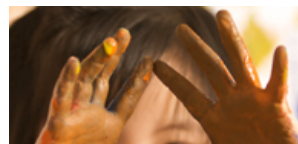
only part of the story ...

- A significant number of new arrival families have little or no proficiency in English AND cannot read or write in their own language.
- The Community Radio Advertisements project demonstrated the relevance of the spoken medium as a means of transmitting information.
- The internet affords the possibility of developing 'talking' forms – increasing use of audio/visual formats.
- Language is both an enabler and barrier to inclusion.



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- Tested the recall of and relevance to CALD families of key early childhood messages that were ‘out’ in the public domain
 - Taking up Maternal and Child Health Services
 - Nutrition
 - Reading
- Chinese and Arabic speaking families with children aged 0-5 years
- Outcome:
 - Messages were confusing
 - Families were aware of the information, and keen to comply, but did not know how to
 - The wrong ‘voice’ was used for essentially ‘female’ issues



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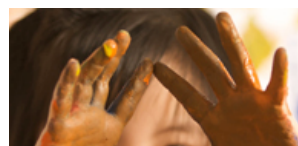
- **Tap into Water Everyday**

For healthy bodies and teeth, children need to drink water and limit sweet drinks. Reduce sweet drinks including fruit juice, fruit drinks, **soft drinks**, flavoured mineral water, cordials, sport drinks, energy drinks and flavoured milk.



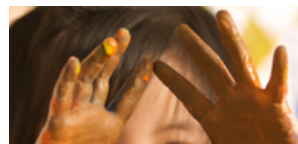
- **Plant Fruit and Veg in Your Lunchbox**

Fruit and vegetables provide essential nutrients for healthy eyes, skin, hair and protect against many diseases. Colourful and crunchy vegetables and fruit should be an enjoyable part every child's day.



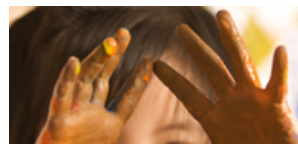
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- WORDS are confusing and ambiguous
 - “expressed”, “developmental delay”, “incursion”, “we cater for”, “key age and stage visit”, “kindergarten inclusion support service”
- Some words have no equivalent in non-Western languages
 - “emotion”, “emotional intelligence”
- Some are just very difficult
 - “autism”, “autism spectrum disorder”
- The Lexicon will contain around 150 words (down from a first cut of 680)



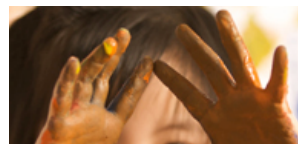
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- The 'way' the early years' workforce responds to a CALD family is also important
- Cultural Competence Training for Early Childhood Professionals will provide early childhood professionals with:
 - An increased understanding of the effective use of accredited interpreters
 - Skills in delivering a culturally sensitive approach to MCH related issues
 - A richer understanding of culturally influenced behaviour.
- Training commences September 2010



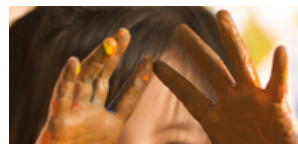
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- **Harnessing IT**
 - Increased use of video based interpreting especially for remote areas and for the metropolitan fringes.
 - Progressive development of materials that do not rely on print media – eg audio/visual resources located on publically accessible websites.
- **And also**
 - Investigate the factors that prevent or discourage non-English speaking families accessing services.
 - Use community radio to promote key early years ideas
 - Use bi- and multi-lingual language aides to help parents with kindergarten enrolment and transition to school.
 - Increase the range of information available in translation and the number of languages into which it is translated.



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- The demand for language services will continue to grow
- Early years' services need to be able to interact with families regardless of their proficiency in English.
- Considering that around 3.8% of Victorians don't speak English at all or who speak English poorly, and just over a million Victorians speak a language other than English at home, the challenge for our services and for government is considerable.
- Supporting CALD families is not just about providing more translations and more interpreters.



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