

# MACEDONIAN AGENDA



**16 essays on the development of Macedonian culture in Australia. Includes cultural values, language, religion, arts, identity, women's issues, the elderly, immigration, politics, the "child refugees", human rights and more**

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Victor Bivell**

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*Front cover: February 2, 1960, Bitola Railway Station, Macedonia:  
Mr Aleksandar Kolupacev is farewelled by his village, Gjavato, as he  
sets out for a new life in Port Kembla, Australia.*

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# **The Macedonian Elderly: A Needs Study Of The Macedonian Elderly In The Western Region of Melbourne**

**Macedonian Community Welfare Association Of The Western  
Region Inc**

*This is an edited version of the report, The Macedonian Elderly: A Needs Study of the Macedonian Elderly in the Western Region, published in Melbourne, June, 1993*

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## **Executive Summary**

This report is a pioneering work in the exploration of the needs of the Macedonian elderly. Whilst its essential focus is the four Macedonian senior citizen groups of Keilor, Sunshine, Footscray and Altona in Melbourne, nevertheless it presents a general picture of the Macedonian people and their historical background.

The main source of specific information about the Macedonian elderly was a survey which mainly looked at the knowledge and use of the Home And Community Care (HACC) services.

The primary research was conducted with:

1. Key information in the local social welfare field.
2. The community - 100 Macedonian elderly citizens (the respondents).

The key findings of this survey were:

a. There was very little knowledge and very limited use of the HACC services and facilities.

b. Services need to be promoted in a proactive manner.

Whilst there was no existing information available on the Macedonian elderly for the conduct of secondary research, general information on the

Macedonians was drawn on for the purpose of this report. Of interest here are the patterns of migration and settlement, key cultural values and preoccupations together with a brief guideline of the history of the Macedonian people.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of Project**

During 1992, the Macedonian Community Welfare Association of the Western Region (MCWAWR) received a grant from Community Services Victoria (CSV) under the HACC Program to document the needs and support the elderly Macedonians in the western region of Melbourne. The Macedonian senior citizens groups targeted were in the municipalities of Keilor, Sunshine, Footscray and Altona.

This project had a community development perspective and its emphasis on support for elderly Macedonians was a timely extension of the various activities of the MCWAWR since its formation in 1984. The main interests of this association have included support for recreational and sporting groups, dancing groups, elderly clubs, women's groups, research and volunteer information and referral services.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Project**

The project aimed to:

- Promote access and advocacy by establishing formal links between local government and Macedonian elderly groups.
- Educate Macedonian elderly groups about access to decision making processes in the region, so that they can be included in the planning and development of services for their needs.
- Establish social, recreational and information programs in response to specific needs.
- Survey the needs and assess the knowledge and use of HACC services by the Macedonian elderly.

### **1.3 Methodology**

To achieve those objectives the following methods were used: an appointed Macedonian Elderly Research and Support Worker:

- Assisted the transition of elderly citizen groups to Council owned

Senior Citizen Centres (Footscray and Altona).

- Advocated on behalf of Macedonian Senior Citizen Groups to ensure access to appropriate Council owned premises.
- Arranged for Centre based meals to be introduced to all four Macedonian elderly groups.
- Developed and administered a questionnaire to a cross-section of Macedonian elderly from the four groups to examine their profile and needs, knowledge and use of HACC services.
- Arranged health based sessions targeting Macedonian women in the 40+ age group.
- Developed a women's senior citizens group.

#### **1.4 About the Report**

The specific purpose of this report is to give service providers and other interested individuals or government departments a profile of the Macedonian elderly in the western region of Melbourne. The four groups referred to are based in the municipalities of Keilor, Sunshine (St Albans), Altona (North) and Footscray (Yarraville). A profile of the respective groups can be found in Appendix I.

Whilst many senior citizens in Australia regardless of origin share various characteristics (or problems) across the board, and many "ethnic" groups have closer affinities, ethnospecific reports such as this one can be justified by the high specificity and uniqueness of the cultural/ ethnic group in question. It is not only important to alert policy makers to specific needs of an obvious sort such as language, but also those more elusive areas of experience which are usually referred to with the blanket term "culture".

In point of fact, in the case of Macedonian elderly citizens there are very important dimensions of identity, expressed in ethnic terms, which comprise a major preoccupation for them and certainly pose a problem which requires illumination. It is hardly surprising that in the May 1991 HACC Program Report the following statement was included:

"The consultations with the Macedonian community illustrated that the recognition of ethnic identity was extremely important". (page 7, Ministerial Reference Group on HACC Ethnic Services)

This current research is a pioneer in the area of looking at the needs of Macedonian senior citizens. The study is confined to only four Macedonian senior citizens groups from a possible 12 throughout Melbourne (other important groups are found in the municipalities of Whittlesea, Preston, Northcote, Doncaster, Springvale and Geelong).

Whilst we confine ourselves to the Macedonian elderly in the western region, no doubt the issues will have a more general application and validity for this ethnic group.

## **1.5 Limitations**

There were three major limitations in the execution of the research project.

I) The short term nature of the project with funding allocated for only six months.

II) This research formed a part and not the sole role of the worker as the position title, Macedonian Elderly Research and Support Worker, indicates.

III) The need for the worker to be present while virtually every questionnaire was answered proved to be very time consuming.

Due to the abovementioned limitations which were largely foreseen, virtually all the questions had to be designed to be answered in a pre-set fashion, which curtailed the potentially limitless variety of responses.

Also, these same limitations did not allow the project worker to access any of the isolated and frail elderly in the Macedonian community. The results will therefore represent a younger mean age. However this is a significant snapshot of the HACC users of the very near future so this information should therefore encourage service providers to be productive and develop relevant appropriate services accordingly.

## **2. THE MACEDONIANS IN AUSTRALIA**

### **2.1 Macedonians and the Census in Australia**

It is important to give some explanation about why it is difficult to get accurate statistics on the Macedonians. After all, many plans and decisions for service delivery are necessarily made on numbers which indicate the range and extent of need.

Amongst the Macedonians themselves it is generally believed that Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for the Macedonian people are significantly understated. Community estimates range from 150,000 to 200,000 Macedonians living in Australia. The Diocese of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in Australia which has jurisdiction over 19 churches gives a modest 150,000 plus.

However the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of 1986

revealed that 41,893 people in Australia indicated as being of "Macedonian ancestry", the majority of whom live in Victoria and NSW.

The explanations for such discrepancies are the persistent after effects of historical reasons such as the lack of recognition and denationalization in country of origin and poor understanding of what is being asked. Thus due to the fact that Macedonia was not an independent country there is confusion in self-identification with such labels as "Yugoslav-Macedonian" or "Greek-Macedonian" which the ABS did not classify as valid designations of either ethnicity or language. To the outsider it may seem odd that ethnic identification does not appear a straightforward matter. In fact in terms of everyday living it is not so complicated. Some of the difficulty is a result of the fear of bureaucracy. Macedonians have a very negative experience of authorities and officialdom regardless of which part of the divided homeland they come from. Moreover, notions of confidentiality and trust of authority are difficult to accept by people who have experienced the institutionalized paranoia of the police state.

An interesting statistic for Victoria from an official source other than the ABS is that of the state Ministry of Education (now the Directorate of School Education - DSE). In 1990 the ministry released data on "Language spoken at home" which indicates that Macedonian is the fourth largest language of the students of Non-English Speaking Background in the state school system.

## **2.2 Macedonian Community Structure in Victoria**

Few people who have a close familiarity due to membership or professional involvement with a particular community would be inclined to disagree with the following judgement:

"Communities are always mixed, contradictory, conflict-ridden and by no means socially isolated entities". (Kalantzis, Cope and Slade, 1985 p94)

This is true for the Macedonian community. Its complexities of background, language and identity are reflected in its organizational structures in Victoria.

In the traditional pre-industrial society from which most Macedonians have come, life was centred around the village church. This has been duplicated to some extent in the countries to which they have migrated. A significant part of the political pluralism that has developed in the Republic of Macedonia since 1989 has been a new emphasis placed on the church as a symbol of national unity. Indeed it would appear that the Macedonians in the home country believe it is the strongest link with the

diaspora.

In Australia, the first church outside Macedonia was consecrated in 1960. For this reason the St George Macedonian Orthodox Church in Fitzroy, Melbourne, has a powerful emotional significance. It was founded by Macedonians who had their origins in Aegean Macedonia, and what is even more worthy of note, it was established before the Macedonian Orthodox Church was declared autocephalous in 1967 (on the bicentennial of the demise of the Ohrid Archbishopate in Western Macedonia in 1767).

In Melbourne there are four Macedonian Orthodox Churches: in Fitzroy, Footscray, Preston and Springvale. There is also a church in Geelong, while the St George community also has a little monastery located on acreage in Kinglake and the Footscray church, St Ilija, has a monastery in Rocklyn.

Typically, the Macedonian Orthodox Church parish has a church run by a church board, a social committee and various subsections such as a school where the language is taught, a women's group as well as a folkloric dance group for the young people. Broader welfare activity has not been seen as a role of the church.

In 1984, a group of more than 30 Macedonian organizations came under the umbrella of the Federation of Macedonian Associations in Victoria (FOMAV). Member organizations included pensioner groups, a human rights committee, the Macedonian Teachers Association of Victoria, the Australian Macedonian Drama Group, the Preston-Macedonia Soccer Club, and practically all the folkloric dance groups independent of the churches. The churches did not send representatives as they maintained FOMAV was a "political" organization.

Many of the groups within FOMAV were newly formed and involved professionals from the second generation, and the Federation availed itself of these specialist skills for its lobbying role. In its constitution, FOMAV explicitly stated its intention to be a consultative body, viz:

"Objective 4 (b). To represent the interests of the affiliated bodies and organizations before local, state and federal governments, and other bodies worldwide."

There is nothing comparable in the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Communities which are bound to the canonical rules of the Macedonian Orthodox Holy Synod of Skopje and Ohrid.

In the short period since its formation, FOMAV organized cultural activities, Moomba Parades (it won the best float award in 1990), liaised with government departments and lobbied specific politicians, initiated a Macedonian Welfare Council in the northern suburbs and organized

two mass demonstrations in 1988 which were the first of their kind in Melbourne.

We have noted that the Macedonian churches have been conservative in terms of involvement in the mainstream in Australia, whereas FOMAV saw its role as becoming more and more involved with life in Australian society generally. Apart from these two strands, there is a third which has explicitly nationalist and political goals, mainly determined by a strong attachment and a nostalgia for the place of origin, Macedonia, and its historical fate.

In 1989, in immediate response to attacks on the Macedonian ethno-specificity from Dr V Seselj, a former dissident and Serbian nationalist who at present has a seat in the Serbian parliament in Belgrade, a grass roots political organization was formed and named The United Macedonians of Australia.

In the Statute of the United Macedonians (1989) the main stress is on maintaining and developing "a Macedonian national consciousness". All methods, within legal bounds, are to be used to continue "the revolutionary people's liberation struggle ... [to achieve] ... a united and free Macedonia, independent in the Balkans, or as an equal subject of the European community of free peoples." (Section II, Article 7). With regards to the younger generation, the Australian-born, love of Macedonia ("the old fatherland") is to be fostered alongside love of Australia ("the new fatherland").

Significantly, when multi-party elections were finally permitted in Yugoslavia in 1990, the United Macedonians in Victoria formed a political branch of the nationalist opposition party in the Republic of Macedonia and started fundraising for the election campaign. The party, VMRO - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity, had enormous emotional appeal because of its use of the name of the most important liberation movement in modern Macedonian history (VMRO - Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization [1893-1934]). Whilst the party won the most parliamentary seats in the first democratically held elections, it did not get an absolute majority mandate and has since been in opposition.

More than 150 Macedonian organizations in Victoria usually roughly fall within the three strands of ideas and practices of the organizations described in this section. The dominant impulse (with varying degrees of strength) to affirm Macedonian ethno-specificity is present in all of them, although there is broad disagreement about procedures and differences in rhetoric.

This year, 1993, has seen many dramatic changes in the Macedonian

community in Victoria. Two such changes or movements are worthy of note because they suggest new directions for the community not only in Victoria but Australia.

The first is that 14 Macedonian Orthodox community organizations in Australia have decided to make a move to bring more control of the Diocese of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in Australia and have a Bishop reside locally rather than in the homeland. With more control of church communities by local Macedonians there may be more relevance for the church in local conditions. This is a period of transition not only for Macedonia as a nation but its very institutions and their relations with Macedonians in the diaspora.

Another local (Victorian) change has been the transformation of FOMAV into purely a federation of artistic or folkloric groups. A new structure has been put in its place. The Macedonian Community Council of Melbourne and Victoria has been established with over 70 organizations already forming its extensive membership. In a Macedonian newspaper article (Today Denes 23/ 3/ 93, page 12) the organizers concluded the report on the meeting with resounding optimism: "Macedonians, we are on the crest of a new era, on an international level and locally. The future is in our hands".

In terms of welfare services, two bodies have undertaken this task, one of which has commissioned this report. The MCWAWR is based in St Albans and caters to the large number of Macedonians in the western region of Melbourne. The other is the Australian Macedonian Welfare Council based in Reservoir and caters mainly to the Macedonians in the northern suburbs. More specifically, as this indicates, Macedonians are found in the greatest numbers in such municipalities as Whittlesea, Preston, Sunshine, Footscray and Keilor. In the eastern suburbs they are found mainly in Doncaster, Bulleen and Springvale.

### **2.3 A General Point**

In a demographic and attitudinal survey of the Macedonian speaking community in Queanbeyan and Canberra published by the Canberra Regional Office (1984), there is an interesting summary of findings:

"In the workforce it appears that many of the first generation rode out their disadvantages (ie, lack of industrial skills and English) through hard work ... employees ... were more interested in generating harmonious working relations than overreacting to any racial or other source of tension.

"At home their families also learned the perceived advantages of

keeping largely to themselves, not only as a direct outcome of their long tradition of self-reliance but also because of their awareness of the unfamiliarity of the ways of an urban, industrial based English speaking society. However ... this approach brought with it a general lack of willingness to make rightful claims along with other residents on the opportunities, resources and services available in the wider society. In turn, this led to an underdevelopment of members' occupational skill capacities and thereby to a lack of work promotion and economic advancement. This approach also led to a failure to fully develop their English speaking and writing abilities; and in due course resulted in the inevitable transfer of relative disadvantage to the children" (p2-3).

Broadly speaking this gives a very valuable insight into Macedonians in general from the second big wave of migration, ie mainly those from the Republic of Macedonia. Whilst the above study is based on only 298 families in one particular location in Australia, it would be fair to say that the mechanisms of coping with the English-speaking industrial society which it describes are broadly accurate for most Macedonians. The relatively few graduates of Macedonian origin from tertiary institutions in Australia could be explained in part by the first generation's difficulties and indeed, values. It is not surprising that practically all surveys on the needs of Macedonian speakers (eg Chapman, 1989; Kareski, 1983; and Christie 1990, 1991) stress the need for more bilingual professionals of Macedonian origin in the service areas.

### **3. THE MACEDONIAN ELDERLY IN THE WESTERN REGION**

Whilst the earlier post-war Macedonian migrants (in the 1950s and 1960s) who came from Aegean Macedonia settled in the inner city areas (Fitzroy, Clifton Hill, Northcote, Richmond etc) or on farms mainly in Werribee and Shepparton, those from the Republic of Macedonia (ex Yugoslavia) went to the northern or western suburbs in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The fact that Macedonia was divided and the parts incorporated in larger nation-states has meant that the ethnicity of the Macedonians has not been given due prominence and visibility in Australia. In the past they have been grouped as either a part of the Yugoslav or Greek group as the tendency was to identify people with country of origin rather than specific ethnicity. Of course, Macedonian self-identification was also vitiated by fear, expedience or lack of comprehension of the notion of ethnicity.

So the Macedonians in the western region have generally been lumped with the other ethnic groups from Yugoslavia, with Werribee being unusual in that it has many settlers from Aegean Macedonia. Within the western suburbs there is resettlement as Macedonians move out from inner suburbs such as Yarraville, Spotswood, Footscray and Newport towards suburbs such as Sunshine, Keilor, Sydenham, Delahey, Taylors Lakes and St Albans. A comparable earlier shift has been that of Macedonians from the inner city moving out towards the north (Lalor, Thomastown etc) or the north-east (Doncaster, Bulleen etc).

The approximate membership of the four Macedonian elderly clubs in the western region is as follows: Footscray - 100, Altona - 80, St Albans - 80, and Keilor - 40. We have already mentioned (in 2.1) the difficulty of getting accurate demographic statistics on the Macedonians. Bearing in mind the complexity of the situation we may nevertheless still find some available information useful. For instance in its Comparative Study of Ethnic Communities in Sunshine and Keilor (1992) the MRC North West Region report has this entry on the Macedonian people:

"If it can be assumed that the rate of increase of the aged sector of the Macedonian community is similar to the Yugoslav born, then there will be three to four times as many elderly Macedonians in 2001 as there were in 1986". (page 48)

It is obvious that the number of Macedonian elderly is increasing as is the number of elderly in the rest of the population, and that the urgency for services and attention will become more vital.

For the above reasons Non English Speaking Background (NESB) statistics available from the Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS) of patient episodes in the western metropolitan region are particularly revealing. Table 1 indicates the number of Macedonian-born patients for the period of 1 July 1991 to 30 June 1992.

*Table 1*

Location of District Nursing Centre	Municipalities Served by RDNS Centre	Number of Macedonian - Born Patients
Altona	Altona Werribee Williamstown	53
Broadmeadows	Broadmeadows Coburg	8
Essendon	Essendon	3

	Brunswick	
Footscray	Footscray	29
	Melbourne	
Sunshine	Keilor	38
	Sunshine	
Total		131

A much more revealing set of statistics is those given for patient episodes from the country of origin previously known as Yugoslavia. Of the total patients treated in the period 1 July 1990 to 30 August 1991 in the western metropolitan region 2,790 (or 32 per cent) were NESB. 232 patients (or 8 per cent) of these NESB patients were born in the former Yugoslavia. A further breakdown from this raw data gave the following:

*Table 2*

	Numbers	Percentage
Macedonian	151	65
Croatian	53	23
Serbian	12	5
Unknown	17	7
Total	232	100

At any one time 90 per cent of these 'episodes' are in the elderly (65+) category. (Source: Vivienne Hester, Education Officer, Royal District Nursing Service.)

It would be safe to infer that the Macedonian speakers are by far the more numerous population, generally speaking, not just greater users of the RDNS.

#### **4. SURVEY OF THE NEEDS OF THE MACEDONIAN ELDERLY IN THE WESTERN REGION**

##### **4.1 Aims and Methodology**

The survey conducted for the purpose of this project was modest in scope. The major aim was to assess the knowledge and use of HACC services by the Macedonian elderly. This was done on the basis of the response of 100 respondents to a questionnaire designed by the HACC worker.

Whilst the survey is not painstaking in its details, it is the first time such first hand information has been collected on this scale on the Macedonian elderly anywhere in Australia. Such documentation is essential for the purposes of understanding the life situation of the Macedonian elderly.

Participants in the research were approached through existing elderly clubs in the western region. The purpose of the research was explained and volunteers were asked to respond to a prepared questionnaire.

The questionnaire was translated into Macedonian and interviews with the 100 respondents were conducted by bilingual workers and volunteers. The questionnaire was read to individuals from the groups and usually took 15-30 minutes to complete. This was done for over 90 per cent of the respondents.

It was not feasible to attempt a random sampling of elderly Macedonians. However, the final results are encouraging in that the sample characteristics proved to be consistent with some of the known population statistics. Sample data such as gender mix and place of residence were similar to the census figures for the population distribution within the western region. Overall, between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of the elderly Macedonians, as identified in the 1986 census, were interviewed from the main locations of the community within the region. Therefore it can be argued that the sample is typical of the elderly population and that the research findings are applicable to a large number of people.

## 4.2 Survey Findings

### Question 1. *WHICH ELDERLY GROUPS DO YOU ATTEND?*

	Male	Female	Total
Keilor	1	1	2
Keilor & Sunshine	9	9	18
Sunshine	10	7	17
Sunshine & Altona	1	-	1
Sunshine & Footscray	1	-	1
Altona	10	-	10
Altona & Footscray	1	1	2
Footscray	20	29	49
Total	53	47	100

It should be kept in mind that equal numbers from each group were

not surveyed. Approximate breakdown of the membership of each group at the time of the survey was: Footscray 100, Altona 80, St Albans 80, Keilor 40. Actual regular attendance at these groups are between half for the bigger groups to two-thirds for the smaller groups of these respective figures.

**Question 2. WHICH SUBURB DO YOU LIVE IN?**

Keilor	5
Sunshine	18
Footscray	21
Altona	8
St Albans	18
Avondale Heights	4
Keilor Downs	2
Braybrook	2
Altona North	1
Footscray West	2
Yarraville	10
Williamstown	2
Spotswood	1
Moonee Ponds	1
West Sunshine	2
North Melbourne	1
Maidstone	1
Taylors Lakes	1
Total	100

Ninety nine per cent of respondents live in the western region of Melbourne, which fall into the following municipalities, below.

**Question 3. WHICH MUNICIPALITY DO YOU LIVE IN?**

	Male	Female	Total
Keilor	11	10	21
Sunshine	17	13	30
Footscray	13	21	34
Altona	9	-	9
Williamstown	2	2	4
Essendon	1	-	1
Other	-	1	1
Total	53	47	100

When we check what municipality the respondents live in against the figures of actual group attendance, we find that one-third of respondents who attend the Footscray group don't live within the municipality. Despite the group having recently moved from its central position in Footscray, which is well served by public transport, to a location in Yarraville, the status of being the original Macedonian elderly group in the western region has held an attraction for many people.

#### Question 4. *SEX OF RESPONDENT*

The sample consisted of 53 males and 47 females.

#### Question 5. *AGE OF RESPONDENT*

	Male	Female	Total
<50	3	4	7
50 < 55	3	7	10
55 < 60	6	9	15
60 < 65	16	11	27
65 < 70	13	12	25
70 < 75	11	4	15
Total	52	47	99

Minimum age = 42

Maximum age = 74

Average age = 62.3

Median age for sample = 64

Fifty two per cent of the respondents are between the ages 60 to 70 years and 15 per cent are 70 and over.

#### Question 6. *COUNTRY OF BIRTH*

Macedonia	72
Yugoslavia	21
Greece	5
Not Stated	2
Total	100

This question was left open to respondents to choose what they

identified as "country".

It is interesting to note that when cross-checked with Question 7 which asks, which area (of the country of origin) do you come from, 95 per cent indicated they came from a region of the Republic of Macedonia or the Republic itself.

**Question 7. WHICH AREA IN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN?**

Macedonia	20
Bitola	59
Prilep	5
Ohrid	4
Skopje	1
Kocani	2
Lerin	4
Serbia	1
Not stated	4
Total	100

**Question 8. YEAR OF ARRIVAL IN AUSTRALIA**

	Male	Female	Total
1950 - 1954	1	1	2
1955 - 1959	2	3	5
1960 - 1964	11	1	12
1965 - 1969	18	11	29
1970 - 1974	12	20	32
1975 - 1979	2	5	7
1980 - 1984	3	5	8
1985 - 1989	4	1	5
Total	53	47	100

The bulk of settlers (73 per cent) arrived in the 15 year period between 1960 and 1974. The greatest concentration (61 per cent) was in the 10 year span between 1965 and 1974. Forty-seven per cent gave economic reasons for migrating whilst 41 per cent gave family reunions.

Looking at the gender breakdown of the period, when the bulk of these settlers arrived, there is a marked difference between the sexes. There appears to be a time lag, with women arriving after the men and then surpassing their numbers. This is consistent with the practice and tradition of pechalbarstvo where the man goes out of his home country

to earn money and if he finds the new land more congenial, rather than go back, he brings his family out.

**Question 9. IMMIGRATION/ SPONSORSHIP CATEGORIES**

Sponsored by child	19
Sponsored by child & independent	2
Sponsored by relative/ friend	41
Sponsored by relative/ friend/ & independent	5
Refugee/ displaced person	-
Assisted passage	5
Independent	13
Sponsored by spouse	15
Total	100

**Question 10. REASON FOR EMIGRATION**

	Male	Female	Total
Economic	29	18	47
Economic & family	1	1	2
Political	-	-	-
Family reunion	16	25	41
Other	7	2	9
Unknown	-	1	1
Total	53	47	100

More men than women (29 vs 18) responded that they migrated for economic reasons, whereas a similar opposite response was given between the sexes (16 vs 25) for family reunion.

**Question 11. RELIGION**

98 of the respondents were of the Orthodox religion, and two registered other.

**Question 12. LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

	Male	Female	Total
None	3	13	16
Some Primary	35	26	61
Completed Primary	10	3	13

Some Secondary	3	2	5
Completed Secondary	2	-	2
Completed Trades/ Tech	-	3	3
Total	53	47	100

A large number of respondents (77 per cent) had only a few years of primary schooling (usually up to grade 4) if at all. Only 10 per cent of respondents had gone beyond the level of primary school. The implications of this can be seen in the responses to the following questions 14-16. It is interesting to note that although women generally had fewer years of schooling, the only three respondents registering the highest level of education were women. We cannot be certain of these respondents' ages.

With such a low level of education in their own language, it is obvious that there are special communication needs which have to be considered. Clearly the best method for reaching the Macedonian people is through radio programs in their own language.

These statistics for the Macedonian elderly are certainly typical of practically the entire age group or generation. This fact can be easily corroborated by anyone who is in contact with them on a regular basis. The war years go a long way in explaining this situation together with the rural or working class background of the respondents.

Clearly a low level of education and literacy in one's own language has implications for the capacity to learn English (or the host language) in Australia.

### Question 13. *UNDERSTANDING OF ENGLISH*

#### 13a *UNDERSTANDING OF SPOKEN ENGLISH*

	Male	Female	Total
Hardly/ not at all	45	39	84
Not well	5	7	12
Fairly well	2	1	3
Very well	1	-	1
Excellent	-	-	-
Total	53	47	100

#### 13b *SPEAK ENGLISH*

	Male	Female	Total
Hardly/ Not at all	45	40	85
Not well	5	6	11

Fairly well	1	1	2
Very well	1	-	1
Excellent	-	-	-
Not stated	1	-	1
Total	53	47	100

Clearly, speaking and understanding spoken English is an area that respondents felt, on self assessment, that they did not fare well in. This response is fairly evenly spread between the sexes.

### 13c *READ ENGLISH*

	Male	Female	Total
Hardly/ not at all	48	45	93
Not well	2	2	4
Fairly well	1	-	1
Very well	1	-	1
Excellent	-	-	-
Not stated	1	-	1
Total	53	47	100

In terms of literacy the results indicate even less competence in the host language.

### 13d *WRITE ENGLISH*

	Male	Female	Total
Hardly/ not at all	49	45	94
Not well	2	2	4
Fairly well	1	-	1
Very well	-	-	-
Excellent	-	-	-
Not stated	1	-	1
Total	53	47	100

### Question 14. *EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTIES WITH ENGLISH?*

#### 14a *DIFFICULTY READING INFORMATION IN ENGLISH*

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	49	44	93

No	2	-	2
Sometimes	2	3	5
Total	53	47	100

**14b DIFFICULTY FILLING-OUT FORMS IN ENGLISH**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	50	47	97
No	3	-	3
Sometimes	-	-	-
Total	53	47	100

**14c DIFFICULTY LISTENING TO NEWS IN ENGLISH**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	46	40	86
No	5	1	6
Sometimes	2	6	8
Total	53	47	100

**14d DIFFICULTY READING NEWSPAPERS IN ENGLISH**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	49	46	95
No	4	-	4
Sometimes	-	1	1
Total	53	47	100

**14e DIFFICULTY HOLDING CONVERSATION IN ENGLISH**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	41	38	79
No	3	1	4
Sometimes	9	8	17
Total	53	47	100

**14f DIFFICULTY COMMUNICATING WITH DOCTOR IN ENGLISH**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	38	39	77
No	6	5	11

Sometimes	9	3	12
Total	53	47	100

The least difficulty registered was with their treating doctors. It is interesting to note that there is a greater number who express that they don't have difficulty in communicating with their doctor. It is also evident from the above two tables that respondents felt more confident in face to face communication.

Predicably, speaking and understanding English is minimal for 96 per cent of the respondents. Non-competence in reading and writing English was even higher at 98 per cent of the respondents.

The obvious communication barrier here with the host culture does not need to be elaborated. It stresses the need for bilingual workers and professionals as well as qualified interpreters.

**Question 15. UNDERSTANDING OF MACEDONIAN**

**15a READ MACEDONIAN**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	48	36	84
No	5	11	16
Total	53	47	100

**15b WRITE MACEDONIAN**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	47	36	83
No	6	11	17
Total	53	47	100

**Question 16. UNDERSTANDING OF MACEDONIAN SCRIPT**

**16a READ/ WRITE IN ROMAN SCRIPT**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	33	20	53
No	20	27	47
Total	53	47	100

## 16b READ/ WRITE IN CYRILLIC SCRIPT

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	47	37	84
No	5	10	15
Total	52	47	99

Whilst 84 per cent could read Macedonian and 83 per cent could write it, there were 16 per cent who had no literacy whatsoever - presumably the 16 per cent who did not have any schooling.

The use of Cyrillic script (used in standard Macedonian) was consistent with the above whereas 47 per cent of the respondents could not read Roman script and the remaining 53 per cent could.

The level of competence that the respondents have in the Macedonian language is not known. Given their level of education, one can assume that official documents translated into Macedonian would need explanation.

The Macedonian language has only been codified since the beginning of the post-war period (1946) when a literary standard was finally established. This was a culmination of a long historical process which began in the mid 19th century. The liberation from denationalization and assimilationist policies in Vardar Macedonia (which became the Peoples or Socialist Republic of Macedonia in 1944) enabled the development of a literary standard for the language without opposition.

Therefore for most of the respondents their native or mother tongue which they would have used when young would have been a dialect of Macedonian and the scant schooling they received would have been mostly in Serbian or entirely in Serbian if they went to school before the Second World War.

It is also interesting to observe that of those who indicated the region of Macedonia from which they came, 70 per cent would use a regional dialect on which the literary standard was based (Bitola, Ohrid, Prilep, Lerin) - that is, the central dialects.

With the Macedonian elderly one can safely say that interpreters or bilingual professionals and workers need to be sensitive to dialectical language so that the aim would be to communicate effectively rather than speak a "correct" educated standard of the language. Obviously the same point can be made for English-speakers and the call for "plain English" in all Government documents (and "plain Macedonian" for those which have been translated into Macedonian) is not idle.

Question 17. *MARITAL STATUS*

	Male	Female	Total
Single (Never Married)	-	-	-
Married	47	36	83
Separated	-	-	-
Divorced	-	3	3
Widowed	5	8	13
Other	1	-	1
Total	53	47	100

The response reflects the strongly felt cultural value of the institution of marriage.

Question 18. *DWELLING*

	Male	Female	Total
Own Home	39	34	73
Own Home, mortgaged	2	2	4
Privately Rented House/ Flat	1	2	3
Ministry of Housing Rented Accommodation	5	3	8
With Children/ Relative in their own home	2	3	5
Boarding	-	-	-
Hostel	-	-	-
Nursing Home	-	-	-
Other	4	3	7
Total	53	47	100

Question 19. *HOUSEHOLD/ LIVING ARRANGEMENTS*

	Male	Female	Total
Living Alone	5	9	14
With Spouse Only	23	20	43
With Children	1	6	7
With Other Relative	-	-	-
With Spouse & Children	23	12	35
Other	1	-	1
Total	53	47	100

85 per cent of respondents lived with someone else, be it their spouse, children or both. However, relatively speaking, more than twice as many women (approximately 20 per cent) than men, lived alone.

No doubt the fact that Macedonians are predominantly economic migrants, and have a tradition of being self sufficient explains the high level of home ownership. There is a tremendous pride in this type of achievement and, culturally, renting accommodation is viewed as having failed to achieve basic goals.

Traditionally the Macedonian family has been a powerful tightly-knit unit which was the basis of life's purpose. It is the central value and one's misery or happiness is measured by how well the family fares. In Macedonia the traditional extended family living arrangements have been slowly undergoing change with the population moving more and more to the cities. However, the urbanization/ industrialization is nowhere near comparable to Melbourne. Indeed, the capital city of Macedonia, Skopje, has a population of some 500,000 only, and is a very compact city. Like the majority of first generation Macedonians in Australia, most of the respondents have a rural village background and therefore the move towards the nuclear family or the situation of living alone or with just a spouse in a large city would be quite traumatic or at any rate would require considerable adjustment.

#### Question 20a. *FEELING ISOLATED OR LONELY AT HOME*

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	12	22	34
No	26	24	50
Sometimes	15	1	16
Total	53	47	100

Half the respondents indicated they didn't feel isolated or lonely at home. However a total of 50 per cent did, to varying degrees, feel lonely.

How can we reconcile this with the 85 per cent of respondents stating they live with someone else in the home?

Consistent with the response to the previous question, almost half the female respondents felt isolated or lonely, twice as many as the men. It is also interesting to note that far more men (15) than women (1) responded in the "sometimes" category.

Of the 50 per cent of respondents who did feel lonely at some time, the following question was asked.

**Question 20b. *FEELING ISOLATED/ LONELY AT HOME AND INTERESTED IN A VISITING SERVICE***

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	15	17	32
No	5	4	9
Don't Know	3	1	4
Not Stated	4	1	5
Total	27	23	50

Almost two-thirds responded yes. It must be borne in mind that most of the respondents are physically active and able members of the elderly citizens' clubs. It would be interesting to find out how those who use the Royal District Nursing Service spend their time and what quality of life they have.

Those responsible for access and advocacy of the Macedonian elderly will be inevitably concerned with the visiting service and will no doubt have to develop networks with volunteers and/ or community structures which alleviate the problem of elderly isolation and malaise.

**Question 21a. *IF EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES WHO WOULD YOU TURN TO FOR HELP?* (Tick as many as appropriate)**

	Male	Female	Total
Spouse	4	5	9
Children	26	28	54
Friends	6	3	9
Pensioner Group	3	1	4
Australian Welfare Service	-	1	1
Macedonian Welfare Service	16	5	21
Council	2	-	2
Other	3	-	3
Not Stated	6	6	12

When asked who they would turn to for help when in difficulty more than half of the respondents nominated their children. The availability and knowledge of an ethno-specific welfare service for Macedonians totalled as the next largest response. Most of the respondents nominated people or a service where Macedonian is spoken.

This again bears testimony to the very strong family bonds which are created by Macedonians.

The need for services where Macedonian is spoken cannot be emphasized enough.

**Question 22. DO YOU KNOW OF ANY SERVICES WHICH ASSIST THE ELDERLY? (Tick as many as appropriate)**

	Male	Female	Total
No	35	41	76
GIA/MRC Worker	10	2	12
HACC Worker	6	2	8
Social Security	1	-	1
Macedonian Worker	2	2	4
Community Services	1	-	1
Meals on Wheels	-	1	1
Respite Care	1	-	1
Community Health Centre	1	-	1

It is interesting to note that the respondents identified more with the person in the position rather than the position's title. For example, only one-quarter of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the HACC and Grant-in-Aid workers, even though the workers filling these positions assisted with the completion of virtually every questionnaire and acted as a resource to all the elderly groups. It is likely that the elderly respond more readily to a known individual with whom they can identify (also refer to comments relating to question 36).

**Question 23. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THESE SERVICES?**

	Male	Female	Total
Word of Mouth	1	1	2
Notices/Pamphlets	4	2	6
Local Council	4	-	4
Other	10	1	11

**Question 24. EVER USED SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY?**

**24a MEALS ON WHEELS**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	1	2	3
No	52	45	97

Total	53	47	100
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24b *HOME HELP*

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	1	2	3
No	52	45	97
Total	53	47	100

24c *HOME HANDYMAN*

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	2	2	4
No	51	45	96
Total	53	47	100

24d *COUNCIL MINIBUS*

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	2	3	5
No	51	44	95
Total	3	47	100

24e *HOME NURSING*

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	2	1	3
No	51	46	97
Total	53	47	100

24f *COUNCIL SENIOR CITIZENS CLUB*

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	14	12	26
No	39	35	74
Total	53	47	100

24g *COUNCIL SOCIAL WORKER*

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	2	-	2
No	51	47	98

Total	53	47	100
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#### 24h GERIATRIC ASSESSMENT

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	1	1	2
No	52	46	98
Total	53	47	100

#### Question 25. REASON FOR NON-USE OF SERVICE

	Male	Female	Total
Not needed yet	37	31	68
Children/ family/ friend help	12	12	24
Don't know of services	7	5	12
Don't like asking for help	-	2	-2

#### Question 26. IF HELP NEEDED AT HOME WOULD YOU USE ANY COUNCIL SERVICES?

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	37	32	69
No	8	8	16
Don't Know	8	7	15
Total	53	47	100

Seventy six per cent of the respondents had no knowledge whatsoever about the various services assisting the elderly in the community. Twenty four per cent know of something available.

There is obviously a large proportion of Macedonian elderly who have no knowledge of the availability of various forms of assistance. One per cent knew that each of the following was available: Meals on Wheels, Community Services, Respite Care, Social Security, Community Health Centre.

The implications of this are very serious: many Macedonian elderly are totally alienated from mainstream social and community services. This is consistent with no competence in English and a poor level of education. It suggests a passivity and powerlessness which calls for intense community education and development. No doubt the questionnaire itself conducted in a personal interview with a bilingual profes-

sional would have been an eye-opener for many of the respondents.

With the exception of the Royal District Nursing Service and the Geriatric (now Aged Care) Assessment Team (Health Department), all the above services are provided by local council.

There are complex issues here in terms of the reason given for low use ("did not need the service"). Culturally such services as Meals on Wheels for instance, if known about, may be perceived as charity which implies failure in one's family life. Pride is an important factor at work in a range of situations where the preferred ideal for help - the children - is not forthcoming. This is a difficult area to quantify, but many of these attitudes can be unearthed amongst the elderly directly. In point of fact, quantified research is out of the question in such areas as human beings cannot be programmed to give dispassionate and objective responses to matters which are so sensitive. On the basis of what we know about the values of Macedonian culture, the pride of family and the humiliation of accepting charity or help which is perceived to imply personal failure and/or weakness, it is not surprising that many services are not used. Of course, when necessary, people do adapt, in which case they need to be made aware of and to understand the nature of the service.

In answer to the question "would people use Council services if they were needed?", there was a positive response of 69 per cent. Yet in the light of the above discussion relating to cultural values/ perception, how and when would it be possible to make the assessment for need?

**Question 27a. ATTEND MEETINGS / ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED BY MACEDONIAN COMMUNITY**

Yes	100
No	-
Total	100

**Question 27b. TYPE AND FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITIES ATTENDED**

	Male	Female	Total
Elderly Group - several times weekly	19	8	27
Elderly Group - weekly	32	34	66
Elderly Group - monthly	-	3	3
Elderly Group - occasionally	1	1	2
Church	1	1	2

Question 28. *DO YOU ATTEND ANY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS OR ACTIVITIES?*

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	7	2	9
No	46	45	91
Total	53	47	100

Ninety one per cent of the respondents said that the only activities or organizations that they visited were the Macedonian elderly group.

One would have to assume that the understanding of what constitutes an organized formal activity by an elderly citizen group is what is being responded to. One assumes that there are other social occasions attended by the respondents such as weddings, christenings, etc or even the Macedonian family get togethers arranged by village or regional clubs such as balls or dances.

However what does seem to emerge out of this response is the theme of social isolation and that the main or most important social event for these elderly is the get together with people of their own age group who speak their own language.

Question 29. *IF MACEDONIAN SERVICES WERE NOT PROVIDED IS THERE ANYWHERE ELSE YOU WOULD GO TO FOR HELP?*

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	11	5	16
No	25	27	52
No service in our area	3	1	4
Don't know	13	14	27
No answer	1	-	1
Total	53	47	100

If there were no Macedonian services, 52 per cent said that there would be nowhere else to go and 27 per cent said that they did not know what they would do. Without the possibility of communicating in their own language, 79 per cent of the respondents believe themselves helpless.

Question 30. *USUAL MEANS OF TRANSPORT*

	Male	Female	Total
Own Car	29	4	33

Someone drives	6	19	25
Bus/ train/ tram	23	25	48
Taxi	-	2	2
Bicycle	1	-	1
Walk	7	2	9

Predominant means of transport is public transport followed by own car (for males) or as passengers (for females).

### Question 31. *ABILITY TO CARRY OUT ACTIVITIES*

#### 31a *SHOWER, BATHE AND DRESS*

	Male	Female	Total
Without difficulty	42	35	77
On own with difficulty	9	11	20
Only with help	1	-	1
Not at all	1	1	2
Total	53	47	100

#### 31b *GETTING OUT OF THE HOUSE*

	Male	Female	Total
Without difficulty	45	33	78
On own with difficulty	6	13	19
Only with help	1	-	1
Not at all	1	1	1
Total	53	47	100

#### 31c *USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT*

	Male	Female	Total
Without difficulty	45	34	79
On own with difficulty	5	8	13
Only with help	1	1	2
Not at all	2	4	6
Total	53	47	100

#### 31d *DRIVING A CAR*

	Male	Female	Total
Without difficulty	27	6	33

On own with difficulty	3	1	4
Only with help	-	-	-
Not at all	6	9	15
Not applicable	16	31	47
Total	52	47	99

### 31e GOING SHOPPING

	Male	Female	Total
Without difficulty	42	28	70
On own with difficulty	7	10	17
Only with help	1	4	5
Not at all	2	3	5
Not applicable	1	2	3
Total	53	47	100

### 31f HOUSE CLEANING

	Male	Female	Total
Without difficulty	29	31	60
On own with difficulty	3	13	16
Only with help	-	2	2
Not at all	8	1	9
Not applicable	13	-	13
Total	53	47	100

### 31g COOKING

	Male	Female	Total
Without difficulty	27	37	64
On own with difficulty	1	8	9
Only with help	-	1	1
Not at all	9	1	10
Not applicable	16	-	16
Total	53	47	100

### 31h GARDENING

	Male	Female	Total
Without difficulty	23	11	34
On own with difficulty	12	15	27
Only with help	1	5	6

Not at all	5	3	8
Not applicable	12	13	25
Total	53	47	100

### 31i HOME REPAIRS

	Male	Female	Total
Without difficulty	16	12	28
On own with difficulty	7	-	7
Only with help	8	17	25
Not at all	12	7	19
Not applicable	10	11	21
Total	53	47	100

The statistics here are generally of a group of elderly who are still predominately independent and are able to function in their everyday life without experiencing difficulties. But as we said in the previous section, these are the fittest of the elderly. Nevertheless, there are signs that about 20 per cent of the group is experiencing difficulty in some areas of daily activities if left on their own.

### Question 32. *WHEN YOU CAN'T MANAGE ON YOUR OWN WHAT WILL HAPPEN?*

	Male	Female	Total
Stay at home with help from family	12	16	28
Stay at home with help from Council & nursing	1	1	2
Move in with children	2	3	5
Move to Home for Aged	2	-	2
Move to Macedonian Home for Aged	6	5	11
Don't know	23	17	40
Not stated	7	5	12
Total	53	47	100

The greatest concern drawn from these figures is the largest number of respondents (52 per cent) unsure of their future when they became frail. Twenty eight per cent would stay at home with their family and 11 per cent would move to a Macedonian home for the aged (if one existed).

Perhaps here we get a mixture of emotions, hopes, fears, doubts and wishes which are hard to sort out. The most significant and telling detail is the 40 per cent who are completely unsure of what would happen to them. It proves that there are no guarantees and certitude and points strongly towards the need for creating stronger support networks and structures for the elderly within the Macedonian community.

**Question 33. ARE YOU AWARE OF FRAIL ELDERLY PEOPLE LIVING ON THEIR OWN WHO ARE SICK OR NEED HELP?**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	13	9	22
No	40	38	78
Total	53	47	100

It is worth noting that during the input of the data it was noticed that the figure could represent the same person and not actually 22 different people. We therefore cannot draw any conclusions from the above table.

**Question 34. IS THERE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY?**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	12	11	23
No	12	16	28
Don't Know	29	19	48
Total	53	46	99

**Question 35. HAVE YOU SEEN LEAFLETS TRANSLATED INTO MACEDONIAN?**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	13	6	19
No	31	30	61
Don't Know	9	11	20
Total	53	47	100

**Question 36. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WISH TO ADD?**

The last question was designed to be open ended to give the respondent

the opportunity to give his or her thoughts on anything that may not have been covered.

Although the questionnaire was far from exhaustive, the project workers choice of questions based on initial informal discussions with elderly group members seem to have come across as comprehensive to the respondents. This is drawn not only from the fact that only a quarter of the respondents gave some sort of comment, but that nothing that was stated was new, except for the comments on "equality" and "rights" (see below).

Various responses were given, a number of which were represented. A summation of the answers will be given here in an attempt to encapsulate the sentiments.

The largest single response (10) was for the need to have Macedonian speaking workers. This was indicated both in general and specifically, such as in hospitals. This was qualified by some for the necessity for longer term, if not permanent, positions. This was for the reason that it takes time to get to know a worker to establish the basis of trust and a rapport. New faces or an old worker in a new role proved frustrating as adjustments had to be made on the part of the elderly.

Alongside this need was the request for interpreters. As one respondent elaborated, this was necessary for an informed decision to be made.

Transport, especially for the frail, was sought for travel to and from the elderly groups.

A small number spoke of their right in terms of equality for all senior citizens (groups). A distinction was made between the 'ethnic' as opposed to the mainstream. A number questioned why they don't get the facilities (Senior Citizens Centres) and services (such as transport and the centre based Meals on Wheels service) as 'other' elderly groups do.

## **Recommendations**

The findings of the research show that elderly Macedonians do not know of and do not use mainstream services. These recommendations aim to address these two issues. However it is difficult to target only specific consumers such as the frail elderly because of isolation, language and cultural barriers. The concept of a "continuum of care" should be used to familiarize Macedonians with the range of community supports available to the elderly. This concept will encourage and support the use of ethnic elderly clubs as a way of reaching ethnic community networks which would not normally approach Anglo-based services. Initially these networks may be more focused on the agile elderly and be concerned with

social and recreational pursuits. However, introducing members to HACC services at this stage would prepare them for use of the services as they grow frailer. Dependant members of the community will learn of the services through family networks.

The following are specific recommendations:

1. Councils should market and promote their services to non-Anglo background people through highly visible means such as outreach work at clubs and other venues where the elderly may congregate and through using ethnic organizations for consultation and assistance, in this instance with the MCWAWR and the established Macedonian elderly clubs.

2. Due to the evident semi-literacy amongst the elderly, the sometimes unsympathetic translations, and the choice of script used, it is clear that translated material on its own is not an effective means of communication. All government services and particularly local government and health services should have more face-to-face contact with the elderly as this has shown itself to be a most effective form of communication. This personal contact should supplement the written information. This personal contact should supplement the written information.

3. HACC services should recruit Macedonian speaking workers to assist the elderly.

4. The introduction of a mainstream service to an ethnic group should be seen as the first step. Use of the service should be monitored and adjustments made to ensure the continued use of the services, such as centre-based meals.

5. Service providers should collect data which records ethnicity, country of birth and language spoken, to target those groups under-represented in service statistics.

6. Service planners and providers should establish formal consultation with the MCWAWR to plan and deliver services using the approach outlined in the Protocols for the Establishment and Management of Ethnic Home and Community Care Services in the Western Region contained in the Western Region Ethnic HACC Project Report, Phase 1, May-December, 1992 by Betty Haralambous.

7. The consultations should address the adaptation of mainstream services or the development of ethnic-based services to cater for friendly visiting of the isolated elderly, home-based care, and hostel/ nursing home options for the future.

## **Appendix I**

### **Brief History of Macedonian Elderly Groups in the Western Region**

#### *Footscray Macedonian Elderly Group*

The Footscray Macedonian Elderly Group (FMEG) began when a number of elderly Macedonians gathered to meet once a week. Up until 10 March 1992 the FMEG met every Tuesday at the Footscray MRC annexe at 1 French Street, Footscray. On 17 March 1992 they began meeting in the recently completed extension of the Yarraville Senior Citizens Centre at 48 Fehon Street, Yarraville. Due to the pressure of the growing number of members, the group shifted into the main hall on 30 April 1993 and now meets on Fridays. The group's membership currently stands at 110.

#### *Macedonian Senior Citizens Group of Altona North*

This group started as an off-shoot from the Footscray Macedonian Elderly Group.

On 6 April 1989 a group of people gathered at the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Altona to discuss the possibility of starting up a Macedonian elderly citizens group. Money was collected for membership that day and the group has met every Thursday since in a small upstairs room at the Altona MRC.

The cramped conditions compelled the group to look for new premises but none were suitable until the Altona North Senior Citizens Centre (ANSCC) was built, with its official opening on 18 August 1991.

After the initial period of becoming familiar with the new concept and premises, the group began to regularly meet every Friday at the ANSCC from late January 1992.

The MSCAN still continues to meet at Altona MRC but their days have since changed to Wednesdays. Their current membership stands at 80.

#### *St Albans Macedonian Elderly Group*

Formed in 1984 with the help from the president of the MCWAWR, the St Albans Macedonian Elderly Group meets every Wednesday at the Scout Hall in Percy Street, St Albans.

The group is part of the St Albans Multicultural Elderly Group and meets at the above location which is auspiced by Sunshine Council. The group's membership in February 1993 stood at 70.

### *Keilor Macedonian Elderly Group*

The newest group, the Keilor Macedonian Elderly Group formed on 1 March 1991. It evolved with the assistance of the Macedonian Grant-in-Aid Worker from the MRC North West Region and is now auspiced by the MCWAWR. For some time the group gathered on Fridays in the Community Room at the St Albans Library or in an upstairs room at the MRC North West Region until moving into the recently built Keilor Downs Community Centre on 6 August 1992.

The group meets on Thursdays and currently has 40 members.

## **Appendix II**

The origin of the Macedonian Community Welfare Association of the Western Region Inc goes back to October 1983 when a constituent of the St Albans area, Mr George Kostrevski, went to the Local Member of Parliament, Mr George Seitz, to discuss the needs of the Macedonian community in the locality.

Mr Kostrevski explained that while the Macedonian immigrants had initially settled in the inner western suburbs such as Footscray and Yarraville, there was a clear indication that many were now buying their new homes around the St Albans area. He expressed concern that due to language difficulties and the lack of services in the area, many people had experienced problems with settlement and isolation.

The outcome of the meeting was the identified need to form a Macedonian community group. Mr Kostrevski undertook this task with the assistance of Mr Seitz and the Grant-in-Aid social worker at the St Albans Community Health and Resource Centre.

Until 1990 the only funding the organization had received was from the (then) Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission (VEAC) under the Organizational Support category.

With this sole source of funding the organization nevertheless gave support, financial and otherwise, to start the second Macedonian elderly group in the region, which still meets at the Scout Hall in Percy Street, St Albans (see Appendix I).

They also gave support to the newly formed Macedonian Cultural Artistic Association "Jane Sandanski" which is now the largest youth dancing folk group in Victoria with 300 members.

The Sydenham Park Macedonian Juniors Soccer Club was formed in 1985 under the umbrella of the MCWAWR.

The MCWAWR had also supported a submission as far back as 1985 for a Macedonian Community Worker from the Department of Immigra-

tion and Ethnic Affairs but did not see its efforts rewarded until 1990, when the Footscray Migrant Resource Centre secured funding for a Macedonian speaking position under the three-year Grant-in-Aid program.

In early 1991, under the Community Support and Development Program from CSV, the MCWAWR was awarded funding to research and develop what became the Bilingual Directory of Macedonian Speaking Service Providers in the Western Suburbs.

Earlier in the same year the organization gave financial support to help establish the Keilor Macedonian Elderly Group (see Appendix I).

1992 proved to be most fruitful for the MCWAWR, as funding was received for a worker for the first time. The Macedonian Elderly Support and Research Worker was funded by CSV for six months initially under the HACC program, with some further small funding granted to extend the project. Without this funding this report would not have been possible. In 1993 the MCWAWR was awarded funding from H&CS under the same program to address some of the findings of this report.

Also in 1992 another position was funded for six months by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs (now the Office of Fair Trading) under the Ethnic Tenancy Community Education Project.

In addition the MCWAWR has conducted forums in some secondary colleges in the western region from funding received last year from the Health Department Victoria (now H&CS) for AIDS Education in Ethnic Communities under the Small Grants Program.

Lastly, a small amount of funding was secured from the Office of Ethnic Affairs (formerly VEAC) under the Capital Grants Program which has provided the organization with some necessary office equipment.

With the funds received to date, the MCWAWR has endeavoured to meet the needs of the Macedonian community in the western region of Melbourne. Future available funding will be sought to continue its important work.

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