Ageing Realities in Multicultural Australia
Experiences of Greek-speaking Elderly in NSW

Mrs Maria Kladis, Programs Manager

Dr Loucas Nicolaou, Consultant

Friday 26 June 2015
The GWC Community Services mission is to:

• provide services and programs that empower individuals and groups from the Greek community, and the community at large, to participate in all aspects of Australia’s Culturally and Linguistically Diverse society.

This mission is underpinned by:

• the values and principles espoused by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia and, as such, recognises welfare and community service provision as a sacred task.
Celebrating 40 years of service to NSW since 1975

Over the last four decades, GWC developed many services responding to the community’s changing needs ranging from:

• **initial arrival** (settlement, housing, employment, initial cultural & linguistic barriers etc.); to

• **longer-term life stages** (health & age care, community care, ongoing cultural & linguistic challenges etc.)
The numbers of Greek-speaking elderly Australians continue to grow

• In 2011, the Greek-speaking elderly 70+ in NSW (17 120) represented the 2\textsuperscript{nd} highest non-English speaking group after the Italian speakers.
• The Greek Orthodox religion ranks 6\textsuperscript{th} in NSW (19 678).
• Australia-wide, almost 2\% of the population (383 400) in 2011 identified their religion as Greek Orthodox.
GWC Research Project

‘Ageing in New South Wales
A 2015 perspective on the needs of Greek-speaking elderly, their families and carers’

SELECTED
FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS
Two main research methods were used in 2014-15 study

1. **A self-administered questionnaire**, given to 731 GWC clients (out of a total of 1,379 Greek-speaking elderly, their families and carers attending GWC services.
   - Total of 409 completed questionnaires were analysed.
   - 56% response rate.

2. **Focus group discussions**, involving a total of 182 Greek-speaking elderly (and/or their families/carers).
   - 13 group discussions were held at different GWC service regions in NSW.
   - One of these focus groups was with 22 Greek-speaking elderly who were not GWC clients. This group was included for comparative purposes.
Some key findings

The typical Greek-speaking elderly person in NSW attending aged care programmes has the following characteristics, aspirations and views:

• **Is more likely** to be an elderly woman rather than an elderly man (65% women as compared to 27% men);

• **Immigrated** to Australia primarily from Greece or Cyprus **40 or more years ago**;

• **Uses Greek** as the main language at home;

• **Uses** a mixture of transport facilities, including buses & trains, private car and transport from family and friend;

• **Requires** help for communication in English despite having lived in Australia for 40 or more years;
• **Relies** heavily on GWC, family and friends, the family doctor, and/or the Parish Priest for information and advice about aged care services;

• **Is highly satisfied** with the services received from GWC;

• **Agrees**, strongly or partially, that the aged care services provided by GWC are very responsive to the needs of Greek-speaking elderly not only because of the language but also because they include the religious and cultural needs of the elderly;

• **Is not aware of** the Australian Government aged care reforms seeking to give all older Australians more choice and more of the services they might require;
• **Would like to receive** information in Greek about the Government’s aged care changes;

• **Would not be happy** to pay a fee for a wider choice of aged care services (or is unsure), either because of expecting aged care services to be free, or because of affordability difficulties or simply because of a feeling that a wider choice of services is not necessary; **AND**

• **Disagrees, or strongly disagrees** that the higher the income one receives the greater the financial contribution one should make to the aged care services one receives.
Four implications for GWC Community Services

Based on this research, **GWC needs to**:

1. **continue to do** whatever it has been doing because its clients like and appreciate what GWC does and what GWC provides to them.
   - 98% (of 409 elderly, also supported by focus group discussions) reported a high level of satisfaction with the GWC services they received.
   - This was not necessarily the case with services some of the clients received from other agencies;
2. strengthen existing and establish new effective partnerships and collaborations with some other service providers

- the demand of non-GWC services under the CDC model of service delivery most likely will increase with the growing number of packages that GWC is currently in the process of implementing;
3. **meet** the challenge for ongoing and improved communication with clients and non-clients

- depending on resources, GWC needs to promote increased awareness among the broader Greek community in NSW about its services and programs; **and**
4. **seek** increased involvement in advisory and influencing bodies

- While there is representation at the local and regional levels through for instance participation in community care forums, opportunities for broader representation need to be pursued more vigorously (e.g. membership in FECCA’s Healthy Ageing Reference Committee, especially given the Australian Government’s reliance on consulting peak bodies, as confirmed by the DSS representative on 25 June 2015).
Three implications for funding bodies (e.g. The Australian Government)

1. ‘Ageing in a foreign land’ does not necessarily result in removing language barriers in aged care.
   - 85% needed aged care information in Greek and not just through Internet or Government websites. Only a very small number of clients used these facilities (2% used ‘My Aged Care’ website and 2% used the Internet, a total of 17 out of 409 respondents).
   - There is a need for the Australian Government to strengthen its resources in addressing, either directly or through funding other organisations, the language barriers in aged care services.
2. Apart from language, religion and culture are also important in improving aged care services.

- 91% of the sample pointed to the need for tailored & targeted services, highlighting that GWC aged care services were very responsive because they address barriers deriving not only from language but also from religion and broader cultural differences.

- The Australian Government formally acknowledges this importance and it needs to in practice further support organisations such as GWC to do what they do best, that is, deliver very targeted and tailored services to specific elderly groups.
3. Need for increased education on means testing and benefits of wider choice of services.

- Need for a cultural shift among the Greek-speaking elderly (and arguably other linguistic groups).
- Only about a third of this study’s sample strongly agree that that the higher the income one receives the greater the financial contribution one should make to the aged care services one receives.
- Many of the Greek-speaking elderly clients (over 80 per cent) are not willing to pay any extra fee that may be involved in enjoying a wider choice of aged care services either because they expect those services to be free or because they feel they could not afford it or simply because they feel they don’t need a wider choice at this stage of their lives.
- It is critical for the Government to financially support GWC and other similar service providers to promote a better appreciation and understanding of the means testing process and the advantages of a greater choice of aged care services.
- Means testing approaches for instance are not going away from the Australian social policy system. The more clients understand what it is and how it works the better for them.
Two implications for other organisations similar to GWC Community Services

1. Exhibit resilience in providing ethno-specific and/or multicultural policies to CALD elderly Australians.

- Service provider organisations need to keep adapting their business model to changing needs and pressures. Irrespective of the business model adopted, however, this research lends support to previous empirical evidence demonstrating a mixture of both mainstream and ethno-specific/multicultural services establishes and nurtures a more systematic and effective approach towards meeting the needs of all Australians.
2. Be encouraged to continue to work in partnership with the Australian Government of the day in developing & implementing aged care reforms.

- It must be acknowledged that, at least since 2012 (e.g. National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy – For People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Backgrounds), the Australian Government, through the former Department of Health and Ageing and now the Department of Social Services, has taken a conceptually and practically leading role in striving for an aged care system that is comprehensive and responsive enough to accommodate the needs of all elderly Australians.

- As such, it is to the interests of the elderly for GWC and other similar service providers to continue their collaboration and partnership with the Australian Government in achieving an improved aged care system.
IKARIA - The Greek island
“where people forget to die”

Questions / Comments

Thank you