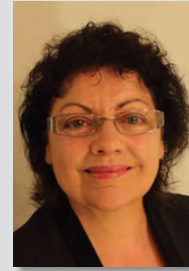


Dr Irene Bouzo

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
Executive Officer



Dr Irene Bouzo (PhD) is the Executive Officer of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV). She worked there for seven years consulting with culturally diverse community groups and policy committees on a range of issues such as aged care, employment barriers and building partnerships in Victoria's multicultural community. In 2008 Irene completed her PhD at the University of New England on multicultural policy and how displaced people and migrants adapt to life in Melbourne.

We Belong Here But... A Victorian Ethnic Community Perspective on Social Cohesion

"We belong here but it's not working out the way we hoped," is a typical comment by Victorians from new and emerging communities. The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) has developed a model of community consultations at the coalface of cultural diversity that provides insights into the complexities of social cohesion. This presentation highlights the interim findings of a series of empirical studies on intergenerational relationships amongst Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The competing demands of transnational living and multiple homelands juxtapose the family burdens of overseas remittances against the cost of local sporting activities for their teenagers. Collectivist ways of thinking and turbulent displacement lead to shame and stigma across the oceans. The everyday frustrations of parents coping with 'bills and fines' impacts on young people and their peer pressure to fit in. Insights show how a lack of intergenerational communication and different cultural approaches to parenting alienate young people from their families and cultural heritage, often with devastating consequences.

Social cohesion is explored in terms of poor community engagement, inadequate education pathways and unemployment. The findings point to multicultural policy solutions and provide research directions.

