



13 April 2015

Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Members

Inquiry into the Communications Legislation Amendment (SBS Advertising Flexibility and Other Measures) Bill 2015

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national peak body representing Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse communities and their organisations. At the heart of FECCA's work is promoting multiculturalism, embodied in equitable policies and non-discriminatory practices for all Australians, regardless of their cultural, linguistic, ethnic, racial or religious backgrounds. On behalf of its constituency, FECCA identifies issues and concerns, promotes matters to the broader community through education and awareness-raising, and contributes to the development and capacity-building of the multicultural sector.

FECCA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Communications Legislation Amendment (SBS Advertising Flexibility and Other Measures) Bill 2015* (the Bill). It is FECCA's view that information access is key to enabling a truly multicultural Australia, and SBS is contributing to Australia's success as a migrant country by facilitating social cohesion between groups of differing cultural backgrounds. Broadcasting in 74 different languages, SBS strengthens the understanding and appreciation of the many cultures that shape Australia's diverse society. Providing multicultural and multilingual services that reflect SBS's unique Charter will only become more important as Australia continues to grow in its cultural complexity. Independently assessed as the most efficient and effective free-to-air broadcaster in Australia, SBS delivers enormous value to the Australian community by ensuring that all Australians – regardless of cultural or linguistic background – actively participate and are engaged in Australian society.

FECCA has repeatedly expressed its disappointment over a funding reduction of \$53.7 million over five years applied to SBS in the 2014-15 Budget, and has called on the Government to reinstate the funding to ensure a longer-term sustainability and quality of a unique multicultural service critical to social cohesion in Australia. The impact of the budget cuts on the content and audiences does not present any actual savings, given the detrimental long-term risk of SBS losing its core multicultural focus, providing a major impediment to enabling the exchange of important information and promoting the diversity of our society.

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In view of the budget cuts, to commence 1 July 2015, FECCA supports the Bill – specifically Schedule 1 – that provides SBS with flexibility in scheduling advertising and sponsorship announcements on its broadcasting services. In supporting the Bill, FECCA notes that the change will not increase the daily advertising limit of 120 minutes currently permitted under the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991*, but would potentially lead to \$28.5 million in net incremental revenue opportunities up to 2018-19. FECCA believes that the additional advertising revenue is necessary to ensure that the role of SBS in supporting multicultural communities is not diminished following the SBS funding reduction.

Recommendation:

FECCA recommends that the *Communications Legislation Amendment (SBS Advertising Flexibility and Other Measures) Bill 2015* be passed.

Yours sincerely

**Joseph A. Caputo OAM JP
FECCA Chair**

