



# Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia

**Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee Bill 2023**

**7 November 2023**



*FECCA pays its respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present and recognise the land we live and work upon was never ceded. FECCA proudly supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart.*

*FECCA acknowledges that our work on behalf of multicultural Australia has learnt from and been enriched by First Nations peoples and organisations. We are committed to continuing to listen, learn and support First Nations peoples in the journey to a more inclusive society.*

## Who we are

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national peak body representing people from multicultural communities and their organisations across Australia. Through the membership of state, territory, and regional councils and their members, we represent over 1,500 community organisations.

## What we do

For over 40 years, FECCA has proudly worked alongside culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the broader Australian society and government to build a successful, productive and inclusive multicultural Australia where everyone, no matter their background or how long they have lived in this country, can belong and reach their full potential.

FECCA draws on the lived experiences of Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse communities and the expertise of its extensive and diverse membership to develop and promote inclusive, innovative and responsible public policy that reflects the needs and perspectives of multicultural Australia. We are committed to building a strong, innovative and inclusive nation that harnesses its greatest strength, the diversity of its people.

## Foreword

FECCA thanks the Federal Government for the opportunity to provide this submission on the inquiry on Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee Bill 2023.

FECCA welcomes the establishment of the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee, and we believe that representation of multicultural communities in decision-making is fundamental to inclusive public policy. The needs, perspectives and aspirations of the diversity of the Australian population must be embedded in the design of all government policy, programs, reforms and legislation.

For enquiries, please contact FECCA CEO Mary Ann Baquero Geronimo at \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

## Background

Migration is the cornerstone of Australia's vibrant and successful multicultural society. Successive waves of migration continue to contribute to Australia's economic success and to shape our society and our place in the world. People from across the globe continue to arrive in Australia every year, bringing with them a rich diversity of backgrounds, life experiences, skills, and strengths. According to the 2021 census, more than half of the Australian population were either born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas, and 22.8 per cent of people spoke a language other than English at home.<sup>1</sup> Good public policy that meets the needs of the Australian nation must be reflective of the diversity of Australia's people.

## Inclusive policy delivers better outcomes

To ensure inclusive and equitable policy outcomes for all Australians, it is critical to include people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in decision-making processes. This will support the lived experience and expertise of Australia's people to be reflected in inclusive policies that foster a sense of belonging and the confidence and skills to participate in the social, political and economic life of the nation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/cultural-diversity-australia>

## Representation of diversity matters

While Australia is built on migration, policy frameworks and service delivery models are not adequately reflective and responsive to the needs of people from multicultural backgrounds. People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are often underrepresented in the policy and program decision-making process, this for example, can be seen in the Australian Public Service where 96 per cent of promotions to the executive level have been awarded to staff with Anglo, Celtic or European names.<sup>2</sup> It is not surprise then that service evaluations and reports on policy and program outcomes indicate that the needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds often remain unaddressed.<sup>3</sup> Australia's experience during COVID-19 is a clear example of how a lack of representation from culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the policy and program frameworks that affect resulted in disproportionately poor outcomes for multicultural communities.<sup>4</sup>

## Recommendations

### **Recommendation 1: The Economic Inclusion Committee must include representation from people from multicultural backgrounds**

Representation of people from multicultural backgrounds on the Committee will ensure the advice provided to Government on policies, programs, services, measures and reforms are equitable, effective and inclusive of the diversity of the Australian people. People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds understand the nuances, barriers and aspirations of their communities. A Committee that includes multicultural representation would be able to draw on the insights from multicultural Committee members' wide networks and relationships built over time, based on trust and deep cultural understanding of diversity. This would lead to more inclusive advice from the Committee and better economic inclusion outcomes for the entire nation.

### **Recommendation 2: Intersectionality must be considered in the Economic Inclusion Committee**

It is important to recognise that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are not a homogenous group. They are affected not only by their cultural and ethnic identities and language, but also by other intersecting social and political identity markers such as age, gender, sexual orientation, impairment, class, religion, visa status and where they live. These identities do not exist independently; each informs the other and can have overlapping and compounding effects. Intersectionality should be considered in the Committee selection process and a deep understanding of the impact of intersectionality on economic inclusion must be embedded into the work of the Committee.

### **Recommendation 3: The work of the Economic Inclusion Committee should contribute to a Multicultural Budget Statement**

Clause 8 of the proposed Bill provides that the Committee's function includes a written report to the Joint Ministers ahead of each Commonwealth Government Budget on matters related to the Government's policies, programs and responsibilities for enhancing economic inclusion and participation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [Federal Public Service has an Asian penalty problem](#)

<sup>3</sup> [IJERPH | Free Full-Text | Public Health Interventions to Address Housing and Mental Health amongst Migrants from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds Living in High-Income Countries: A Scoping Review \(mdpi.com\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Multicultural Framework Review -Draft Terms of Reference](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee](#)

As part of FECCA's comprehensive three-part model for a [National Multicultural Framework](#) recently submitted to the Multicultural Framework Review, we recommended the Commonwealth Government establish annual Multicultural Budget Statements to support spending targeted at addressing inequalities for multicultural communities. Annual Multicultural Budget Statements would provide a mechanism for early identification of unintended consequences and inequitable outcomes from potential Budget measures and demonstrate the Government's deep commitment to inclusion.

The Committee's written report to the Joint Ministers ahead of each Government Budget on matters related to the Government's policies, programs and responsibilities for enhancing economic inclusion and participation, should include particular consideration of multicultural communities. This work could then assist in informing Multicultural Budget Statements.

**Recommendation 4: The work of the Economic Inclusion Committee must be forward looking**

As Australia continues to define and determine the future of our nation, we must look beyond the next decade and develop strategies and approaches that unlock the potential and benefits of our society and economy for all our citizens for generations to come.

As illustrated by the 2023 Intergenerational Report, there is a projected decrease in Australia's labour workforce participation rate, in part driven by the aging population. This demographic shift has given rise to a persistent workforce gap, resulting in increased reliance on migrant workers, women and older Australians in the labour workforce.<sup>6</sup> It is important to recognise that meeting Australia's workforce needs and optimising our workforce participation rate is critical to achieving economic prosperity.

In view of these socioeconomic trends, it is important that the Committee takes these factors into consideration when providing recommendations. Prioritising the development of comprehensive and well targeted integrated migration and population frameworks that foster inclusive participation to ensure Australia's future success.

Additionally, as Australia works towards transitioning to a top 10 digital economy by 2030<sup>7</sup> and a net zero economy by 2050<sup>8</sup>, we must proactively engage with the significant changes this will have on our nation. The Committee therefore needs to develop its advice to Government through a future looking lens and consider the way in which these societal and economical changes impact Australia and to ensure the benefits are shared equally across the nation.

**Recommendation 5: The work of the Economic Inclusion Committee must be coordinated with other Government reforms and agendas**

Government reforms and actions need to occur in the context of the range of other agendas and reforms across Government. Measures to improve economic inclusion need to factor in for example, the work that is occurring through the Multicultural Framework Review, the National Anti-Racism Framework, the Employment White Paper, the Measuring What Matters Statement, Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage, the Early Years Strategy and the Wellbeing Framework.

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<sup>6</sup> [2023 Intergenerational Report | Treasury.gov.au](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Digital Economy Strategy 2022 Update Released, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Net Zero, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water](#)