

## FECCA RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

### QUESTION 1:

**Can you help the committee understand, when you talk about promoting foreign languages, if there is precedent that exists in other countries in and around multilingual petitions and e-petitions?**

FECCA would like to emphasise that the language aspect of most pressing concern is not the ability to submit a petition in languages other than English (LOTE), but the provision of information on how to participate in the e-petition process in LOTE. That is, Australians can access information on how to engage with aspects of the democratic process in their preferred language.

From research that FECCA has conducted, there are parliaments in some states of Australia as well as international parliaments that permit petitions to be submitted in LOTE. In Victoria and Queensland the petition in LOTE must be presented along with a certified English translation. In the Canadian Parliament, the petition can be presented in either of the two official languages (English or French). In South Africa, petitions can be submitted in any one of the seven official languages. The UK parliament requests that petitions in LOTE be accompanied by a translation that is signed by an MP (usually the MP who is sponsoring the petition).

Evidence of these local and international precedents are below. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list of all the countries around the world that allow multilingual petitions and e-petitions.

#### Parliament of Victoria

- <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/council/petitions/electronic-petitions/faqs>
- **Can my e-petition be in a language other than English?**  
E-petitions have the capacity to be presented in a foreign language with a certified translation. To instigate an e-petition in a language other than English please contact VIC email or call 03 9651 8678.

#### Parliament of Queensland

- <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-assembly/petitions/overview/rules>
- **Standing Orders provide the following general rules for petitions:**  
A petition shall be in the English language, or if in another language shall be accompanied by an English translation, certified by the member who sponsors or lodges it to be a true and correct translation.

#### Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

- <https://www.parliament.gov.za/petitions>
- **A petition should comply with the following requirements:**  
The petition must be in any of the official languages of South Africa

#### Parliament of Canada

- <http://www.ourcommons.ca/marleaumontpetit/DocumentViewer.aspx?Sec=Ch22&Seq=3&Language=E>
- **Current Guidelines for Petitions**  
Petitions may be written in either of the official languages.

#### Parliament of the UK

- <https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/sign-a-petition/paper-petitions/>
- **What should a public petition look like?**

It should be in English, or if not in English accompanied by a translation certified by an MP.

#### **QUESTION 2:**

**Could you explain / expand on how your findings from the Digital Access and Equity for Multicultural Communities report might be applied to the House of Representatives E-petitions system?**

We attach here the relevant FECCA Access and Equity report:

<http://fecca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/feccadigitalconsultationreport.pdf>

FECCA recommends that all the webpages related to the House of Representatives E-petitions system recognise the diversity of users and the ensuing gaps in capacity and access, and, utilise person-centric design for those who do not speak English as their first language and/or have limited digital literacy or access. This can be achieved through implementing some of the following measures:

- Ensure that information is available in community languages and plain English
- Identify the availability of interpreters or translators and translated materials with an easily recognisable and consistent symbol
- Enable interactive technologies for people with low written proficiency in both English and their preferred language, for example, the ability to hover over text and access an audio translation
- Provide multiple pathways for members of the CALD community to interact with the E-petitions system if they have any queries, for example, online, over the phone, through a translator
- Communicate with ethnic communities in order to improve awareness of the E-petitions system
- Clearly convey information about privacy and security to users in plain English and community languages

#### **QUESTION 3:**

**Would you please provide any additional information on any accessibility features that other agencies use, that might be used or adapted for use in the House e-petitions system?**

FECCA encourages consideration and utilisation of the GOV.AU Content Guide in order to ensure that the House of Representatives E-petitions system is accessible to CALD users.

<https://guides.service.gov.au/content-guide/accessibility-inclusivity/>

The websites listed below are simple and easy to use. They require some digital literacy to navigate but are not overly complicated. Key information likely to be utilised by CALD individuals such as Languages and the Translator number are located on the homepage. Information is available in many different languages, including newer languages that reflect modern multicultural Australia. Some specific services or features that are particularly relevant to migrants and refugees are clearly highlighted. All webpages utilise plain English and are not text dense.

1800RESPECT <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>

Department of Human Services <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/>

TIS National <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/>

The Fair Work Ombudsman <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>