



6 January 2015

Committee Secretariat
Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

via email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee members

**Inquiry into the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 and the
Enhancing Online Safety for Children (Consequential Amendments) Bill
2014**

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the *Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 (the Bill)*.

FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism, so as to build a productive and culturally rich Australian society.

FECCA has identified cyber-racism and cyber-bullying as key concerning issues negatively impacting youth from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In an effort to further its work in this regard, FECCA has undertaken collaborative work with the Online Hate Prevention Institute and the University of Technology, Sydney to understand the complexity of issues related to cyber-racism and the effectiveness of strategies aimed at its eradication, as well as to explore the extent to which social media can be used positively to build community resilience in the face of cyber-racism.

In light of the above, FECCA welcomes the introduction of the Bill and the establishment of the independent statutory office of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner. We believe that the proposed role of the Commissioner to act as a single point of contact for online safety issues and to take the lead in developing and implementing online safety policies for children, while also promoting and conducting research in this area, will ensure consistency, coordination and transparency in responding to complaints and providing advice on the development and implementation of best practice models.

Given the Commissioner's stated role in promoting and conducting research, FECCA highlights the importance of incorporating data collection in the

**Federation of Ethnic
Communities' Councils
of Australia**

FECCA House
Unit 1, 4 Phipps Close
Deakin ACT 2600

PO Box 344
Curtin ACT 2605

p 02 6282 5755
f 02 6282 5734
e admin@fecca.org.au
w www.fecca.org.au



complaints mechanism in order to understand the prevalence of cyber-bullying, identify its catalysts and any potential vulnerable groups.

Of particular relevance to young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds would be the collection of data that could potentially identify instances of cyber-racism. FECCA reiterates the need for information to be collected around the cultural, linguistic and/or religious background of the complainant. This could be achieved by ensuring that the complaints mechanisms implemented allow the complainant to self-identify with relation to these characteristics and to indicate instances where these specific factors have led to a violation of online safety. Given the nature and impact of issues concerning cyber-racism as a subset of cyber-bullying, the collection of this type of data would identify trends in relation to cyber racism and bullying and will inform the development of targeted strategies to enhance online safety.

FECCA welcomes the holistic approach adopted by the Bill by ensuring that the online safety strategy engages and targets all the relevant stakeholders and addresses issues around prevention and intervention. FECCA is pleased to see that the Bill reflects a commitment to foster collaboration amongst the education system, the community, social media services and the law enforcement agencies in order to educate, raise awareness and provide the most adequate remedies to instances of cyber bullying.

To ensure broader community access to the complaints mechanism as well as to promote understanding of individuals' rights and responsibilities amongst communities, FECCA strongly recommends that the complaints forms should be accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse complainants. This should be facilitated through the provision of translating and interpreting services to complainants of non-English speaking backgrounds, and for information about making a complaint to be made available in key languages. Identifying the languages needed for translation should be done based on any available evidence suggesting higher incidence of cyber-racism or cyber-bullying experienced by particular groups.

FECCA is grateful for the opportunity to make a contribution to the Inquiry and forwards the recommendation that the Bill should be passed in its current form.

Yours sincerely

Joseph A. Caputo OAM JP
FECCA Chair