

**Joint Standing Committee on Migration****Chair: Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP****Deputy Chair: Mrs Louise Markus MP**

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## **Does social inclusion agenda ignore non-English speakers?**

The Social Inclusion Unit from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet will appear before federal parliament's Migration Committee inquiry into multiculturalism on Wednesday, 22 June.

Numerous submissions to the multiculturalism inquiry have criticised the Social Inclusion Agenda because it ignores the fact that a lack of English language skills is a significant disadvantage in Australia. At a recent hearing, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia said to integrate and participate fully in Australia, it is crucial that new migrants and refugees have opportunities to learn English.

"The hearing will explore why the Social Inclusion Agenda has missed such critical factors as language and culture," Committee Chair Maria Vamvakinou said.

"Multiculturalism is about including migrants, enabling them to belong to Australian society without sacrificing their entire identity," she said.

Ms Vamvakinou said the government cannot promote the benefits of migration and multiculturalism without also recognising the challenges.

"If the social inclusion agenda is to be successful issues of language and culture cannot be ignored. English language skills and cultural sensitivity have a direct impact on access to education, employment and the community services that all Australian's enjoy," she said.

"Unless policies on multiculturalism and social inclusion are brought together, government will miss a vital part of the jig saw puzzle."

The hearing will commence at 10.45 am in Committee Room 1R4, Parliament House, Canberra and will be audio broadcast live on:

<http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

Further information about the inquiry can be obtained from the Committee's website [www.aph.gov.au/mig](http://www.aph.gov.au/mig) or from the Secretariat on (02) 6277 4560.

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