

Australian Senate backs FECCA on hate speech laws

The Australian Senate's rejection yesterday of attempts to water down Australia's hate speech laws is vindication of the strong stand taken by the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) on the issue.

The Chair of FECCA, Joe Caputo said that the organisation had fought long and hard against the proposed changes to Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act.

"There was no way we were going to stand by and allow a free rein to racial vilification," Mr Caputo said.

"The Racial Discrimination Act, as it stands, provides protection for vulnerable communities against racial attacks while defending the right to freedom of speech."

Last week, FECCA and ethnic community leaders appeared before a Senate committee examining the proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act.

FECCA's opening statement to the committee can be found [here](#). "Changing 18C would have granted a licence to those working to undo Australia's harmonious, tolerant and cohesive multicultural society. It would have sent a message that it is acceptable for one person to verbally attack another based on their race," Mr Caputo said.

He said that any Senate decision to streamline the processes for handling complaints of hate speech would have the support of FECCA.

"We support efforts to empower the Australian Human Rights Committee to deal with complaints in a fair and efficient manner and to block unreasonable and vexatious claims," he said.

FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. FECCA's role is to advocate and promote issues on behalf of its constituency to government, business and the broader community.

Media contact: (0424) 910617 / emma@fecca.org.au