

# Concerns raised about proposed changes to citizenship law

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) appeared before the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Intelligence and Security to discuss the *Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) Bill*. We highlighted the concerns raised by the community at consultations held by our State and Territory members, including that many feel the Bill would create two classes of citizens.

FECCA Acting Chair Eugenia Grammatikakis said, "Citizenship is the cornerstone of belonging and acceptance in society, and therefore is highly valued by the communities we represent. Our concern is that this Bill disproportionately affects migrants and their children. It has the potential to affect community social cohesion by creating two classes of citizens."

FECCA strongly supports the judicial system, the rule of law, and the right to a fair trial. "We highlight the insufficiency of the Bill to provide important safeguards to protect fundamental rights, including the right to a trial and access to the rules of natural justice," said Ms Grammatikakis.

We are also troubled by the potential effect of the Bill on children. This includes those who engage in conduct, which may lead to the cessation of their own citizenship, or those who may have their citizenship revoked because of the actions of their parents. "As a vulnerable group, the rights of the child are fundamental under international law. We ask for appropriate safeguards and mechanisms to be put in place to protect children from the automatic renunciation or cessation of citizenship," said Ms Grammatikakis.

We maintain that this bill not be passed in its current form and instead is re-drafted and introduced for public consideration.

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