

FECCA applauds Xenophon Team's decision to block new citizenship bill

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) today applauded the Nick Xenophon Team for its decision to use its crucial three votes in the Senate to reject the Government's proposed *Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Requirements for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures) Bill 2017*.

"Congratulations—and the thanks of Australia's multicultural community—go to Senator Xenophon and his team for announcing that they will deliver the numbers to throw out this cruel, unnecessary and discriminatory proposal," the Chair of FECCA, Mr Joe Caputo said today.

"We have fought for months to oppose this oppressive Bill."

"This legislation seeks to dramatically change the rules determining qualification for Australian citizenship, extending the waiting period before permanent residents could apply for citizenship and raising the English language requirement to university-level."

The new citizenship legislation also proposes a dramatic extension of ministerial discretionary powers to overrule immigration decisions by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal."

"This Bill seeks to create a permanent underclass of residents, denied the rights and opportunities of being welcomed and included as Australian citizens," Mr Caputo said.

"For decades, Australian citizenship has fostered inclusivity, allowing migrants to feel Australian, regardless of their country of origin."

"Permanent residents should be encouraged to seek citizenship as soon as practically possible to foster a sense of inclusion and belonging and to encourage integration."

"Australia has a tradition of bipartisan support for its multicultural policies, going back decades."

"There is no place for the kind of extremist, ideologically-driven provisions which were included in this Bill and we congratulate all the Senators who have declared they will oppose it."

"The politicisation of immigration decision-making proposed by this Bill threatens our immigration system, which has an international and long-standing reputation for being impartial, fair and transparent," said Mr Caputo.

FECCA is the peak national 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.

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