

FECCA comments on Federal Budget

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) said that tonight's Federal Budget presented some positive opportunities for FECCA and the Government to support and promote a successful and cohesive multicultural Australia.

Ms Mary Patetsos, Chairperson of FECCA said: "FECCA has consistently called on the Government to provide resources to community-led organisations to support their critical role in helping new migrants to settle and integrate.

"We are pleased that the Government will provide an additional \$5 million in 2018-2019 for community organisations assisting newly arrived migrants to integrate into Australian society through the *Fostering Integration Grants Scheme*.

"We congratulate the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs on this important announcement and for consulting with and responding to Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities."•

In its pre-Budget submission FECCA had called on the Government to provide appropriate resources to the SBS to support its distinctive and unique role in supporting CALD Australians. The Federal Budget confirmed the reinstatement of SBS's base funds of \$8.7 million for the FY2018-19 that could not be raised as legislation to allow the SBS further advertising flexibility was not passed by Parliament.

FECCA also welcomed other key measures in the Federal Budget including:

- Increased flexibility in the Adult Migrant English Program for migrants aged under 18 years;
- The establishment of an Anti-Slavery Unit within the Department of Home Affairs;
- Streamlining services for newly arrived refugees during the first 26-week period of their arrival to assist them to focus on settlement and improving language skills;
- Additional funding for the Commonwealth Ombudsman;
- Additional funding for the VET Student Loans Ombudsman to assist with managing and investigating student complaints;
- The establishment of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Jobs and Market Fund to help providers; and
- Funding for the implementation taskforce, following the report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Ms Patetsos said: "FECCA will work with the various Departments and Agencies to make sure that this additional funding is used to benefit all Australian including those of CALD backgrounds – ensuring that the NDIS Jobs and Market Fund support small ethno-specific providers; supporting CALD Australians who are victims of child sexual abuse to access the redress scheme; and improving access for CALD Australians to the Commonwealth Ombudsman."

FECCA also acknowledged positive announcements such as the review of the Australian Public Service.

"FECCA has been working with the APS to improve CALD representation at all levels of the Federal Government and this review is a great opportunity to examine ways of achieving a more diverse Commonwealth Public Service."•

Ms Patetsos said that FECCA was more cautious regarding other Budget measures.

"We are disappointed that the Government has proposed extending the waiting period for migrants from the current two years to *four* years for various social security payments and to introduce a four-year wait for support including carer allowances, family tax benefit and widow allowances. This is in addition to the three-year wait already proposed in the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Encouraging Self-sufficiency for Newly Arrived Migrants) Bill 2018* which is still before Parliament.

"These changes will impose considerable hardship on migrants at the very time they need a little help to settle into their new home," Ms Patetsos said.

While welcoming the announcement of a pathway to permanency for Retirement Visa Holders, Ms Patetsos also expressed disappointment that places for the Retirement Visa Holders who wished to apply for permanent residency would be taken from the current planned parent permanent migration quota rather than being additional new places.

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.

FECCA's pre-Budget submission can be found [here](#).

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