

FECCA releases report proposing strategic approach to language policy and practice in Australia

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) held a thematic event on '*Australia's shifting linguistic landscape: Language policy and practice*' at the Museum of Australian Democracy (Old Parliament House) in Canberra today.

Dr Joseph Lo Bianco, Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, was our keynote speaker for the event.

The event also featured the launch of FECCA's report, '*Australia's Growing Linguistic Diversity: An opportunity for a strategic approach to language services policy and practice*'.

The report provides an analysis of FECCA's consultation and research to develop an evidence base on language service provision in new and emerging community languages, that is, languages spoken by individuals who came to Australia as humanitarian entrants over recent years.

FECCA Chairperson Joe Caputo said, "The provision of language services can enhance access to social services for migrants, assist to alleviate isolation and lead to better connections with the community."

"Quality language services can also improve health outcomes and enable access to fundamental rights, such as the right to a fair trial. The availability of well-trained, competent interpreters to work with individuals in complex circumstances, such as family and domestic violence situations, is critical to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of these individuals."

Training options for interpreters in new and emerging community languages is limited. In this report, FECCA has recommended an optimal training and accreditation model, based on a review of the various models across jurisdictions and the identification of good practice elements. There is a strong need for a national, multi-jurisdictional program to increase the quantity and quality of language services to meet the language services needs in new and emerging languages.

With the diversity of Australia's population increasing, a solution to address language services needs for emerging languages must be sustainable, flexible and forward-looking; one that can be contextualised and applied to specific languages and the changing circumstances of supply and demand.

Dr Joseph Lo Bianco, Professor at the University of Melbourne stated, "To build our interpreting, translating and mediation services we need high levels of proficiency, support for less commonly taught languages, flexibility and innovation."

"It is in the interests of the entire national community that we support language services, because by doing so the entire community benefits."

The proposed solution could also have a positive flow-on effect for addressing language services supply and demand gaps for other, more established languages, by developing evidence of good practice and innovative solutions. FECCA's report outlines a way forward.

Read Australia's Growing Linguistic Diversity: An opportunity for a strategic approach to language services policy and practice [full report here](#).

Read Australia's Growing Linguistic Diversity: An opportunity for a strategic approach to language services policy and practice [Executive Summary here](#).

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