

FECCA reminds parliamentarians of their responsibility to protect Australia's minority culturally and linguistically diverse communities

28 November 2016

As the debate on 18C continues, the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) reminds parliamentarians of their responsibility to protect the rights of Australia's minority culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

FECCA opposes any attempt to amend or weaken Section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act* that provides protection against racially motivated attacks, including hate speech, against Australians from CALD communities.

FECCA Chairperson, Joe Caputo said: "The re-opening of the debate about 18C sends a message that racism is acceptable in the name of free speech. As it stands, the provisions of the *Racial Discrimination Act* strike a balance between the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom from racial vilification."

Mr Caputo added: "The 2014 debate on this issue was extensive and does not need to be re-opened. There was an overwhelming community response against changes to the *Act*. Instead, the Government and all political parties should show leadership in fighting racism and discrimination and celebrating Australia's multicultural community."

The need to retain 18C was emphasised by the United Nations special Rapporteur François Crépeau at the end of his official visit to Australia who said: "Maintaining section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act* sets the tone of an inclusive Australia, committed to implementing its multicultural practices and programmes and respecting, protecting and promoting the human rights of all."

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.

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