

FECCA's submission to Inquiry into Freedom of Speech urges no change to 18C

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) has reiterated its strong opposition to any attempt to dilute section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) in its submission to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights' Inquiry into Freedom of Speech in Australia.

Mr Joe Caputo, Chair of FECCA said, "There has been a notable rise in racism in Australia and any change to 18C would signal that racism is acceptable in the name of free speech."

"Right now vulnerable Australians need more protections from racist attacks not fewer. The strong support for 18C across Australia's ethnic communities reflects the deep fears held by many Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Australians about the threat of racism and racist attacks," said Mr Caputo.

FECCA is concerned about the growing hostility towards Muslim Australians and other minority groups in Australia.

Mr Caputo said, "Protecting Australians from racial vilification is critical in upholding equality and eliminating intolerance in Australia's culturally diverse society."

FECCA has continued to argue that the provisions of the RDA establish accountability for inciting racial hatred and racist remarks while protecting freedom of speech.

"FECCA believes that the current legislation provides a sound balance between the right to free speech and the right to be protected from vilification," said Mr Caputo. "This position has been informed following wide consultation with our national membership."

FECCA's submission revisits the genesis of Section 18C which was introduced in 1995 at a time when racial violence against Indigenous Australians and migrants was escalating.

Mr Caputo said, "As we again face rising levels of racism, we must maintain the strongest protections against discrimination and vilification. Revising 18C will strip protection from some of Australia's most marginalised members of society and threaten social cohesion in Australia."

FECCA's full submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights can be found [here](#).

FECCA supports [#HandsOff18C](#), a new campaign to preserve section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. The campaign will see multicultural communities stand with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working together to call on the Government to defend the safety of our communities.

FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from CALD 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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