

# Developing a National Strategic Approach to Maternity Services

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**14 May, 2018**

Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council  
Commonwealth Department of Health  
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Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia

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## **ABOUT FECCA**

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The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national peak body representing Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and their organisations.

FECCA provides advocacy, develops policy and promotes issues on behalf of its constituency to Government and the broader community. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism so as to build a productive and culturally rich Australian society. FECCA's policies are developed around the concepts of empowerment and inclusion and are formulated with the common good of all Australians in mind.

FECCA has had a longstanding presence in policy and systemic advocacy on women's health issues for CALD Australians including on maternity services. FECCA regularly undertakes consultations to inform its policy advice.

Currently, FECCA is represented on the National Strategic Approach to Maternity Services Advisory Group and would be pleased to be involved in further dialogue regarding any aspect of this response document.

FECCA wishes to thank the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council for the opportunity to input into the consultation process regarding the future of Australia's maternity services.

FECCA gives consent for this submission to be published in whole or in part.

## FECCA CONTACTS

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**1. Can you in one or a few brief sentences provide what you think would be an overarching key outcome statement for the NSAMS?**

FECCA believes that one key outcome for the NSAMS should be that all Australian women can access culturally safe maternity services in their preferred language.

**2. Do you think there should be a set of values that underpin the NSAMS? If so, could you list the top four values you would like to see included?**

For FECCA the two most important values to underpin the NSAMS are:

- the provision of culturally safe maternity services.
- the provision of maternity services in a woman's preferred language.

**3. Can you outline three or four positive aspects of maternity services in Australia?**

N/A

**4. What do you think are the three or four key gaps or issues for maternity services in Australia?**

The most glaring gap in the consultation paper is the lack of a defined culturally competent maternity plan for CALD women. FECCA would like to see a Culturally Competent Maternity Plan for CALD Women that includes policies and frameworks on:

- language services.
- bilingual and bicultural workers.
- cultural competency training for all staff involved in providing maternity services.
- inclusion of FGM in routine antenatal surveys of risk factors.

**5. What four to six key improvements would you like to see in maternity services in Australia?**

In developing a National Strategic Approach to Maternity Services FECCA would like to see resources committed to developing a Culturally Competent Maternity Plan for CALD Women and specific improvements such as:

- that interpreters be available free-of-charge to women for whom English is not their first language (physically present interpreters preferred over Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS) and that women can select a female interpreter if they wish).
- that interpreters be offered free-of-charge to a woman's family members/key support people when they are involved in decision making especially in emergencies.

- the use of bilingual workers and bicultural workers be considered integral to the delivery of culturally safe care.
- cross cultural training be provided so that healthcare needs of women from CALD backgrounds are handled in a sensitive manner.