

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

FECCA submission regarding the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Inquiry into ParentsNext

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 strives to ensure that the needs and aspirations of Australians from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are given proper recognition in public policy.

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 would welcome the opportunity to expand on this submission as required. For enquiries please contact FECCA Acting CEO Mohammad Al-Khafaji at mohammad@fecca.org.au or on (02) 6282 5755.

Key Points

- FECCA calls for a public, independent review and evaluation of the ParentsNext program with a focus on the Targeted Compliance Framework, the geographically based streams, the compulsory nature of the program and the access to and burden of the reporting requirements whilst ensuring that parents from a CALD background are considered and consulted in the process.
- The changes in implementation between the trial of the program and its current iteration have transformed a positive and supportive program into one defined by less engagement, being inflexible, confusion and for some, even dangerous.
- FECCA is concerned about the increased burden the compulsory nature of the program and its reporting requirements have on new parents whose lives are already busy with their new caring responsibilities.
- These issues are amplified for those new parents who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. FECCA's specific areas of concern are:

- The positive aspects of the program, such as parent's reconnection with Government services, exposure to the labour force, access to English language programs, the opportunity to connect with appropriate services if experiencing domestic and/or family violence and the opportunity to increase their level of skill and education, are at risk with the high burden of the current system.
- The reliance on digital reporting with some people from CALD backgrounds having limited access to a computer, phone or internet with the regularity required to meet the strict reporting requirements.
- The availability of translation services is currently unclear and must be communicated with the participants of the program.

FECCA note and refer the committee to the submissions by SSI and ACOSS as they explore the technical issues in details.