

Preliminary Analysis of the Federal Budget 2022-23

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia

Preliminary Analysis

Federal Budget 2022-23

30 March 2022

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the peak, national body representing Australians from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. FECCA's role is to advocate and promote issues on behalf of its constituency to government, business and the broader community. It is a federated body with State/Territory and Regional members.

Context

Australia's multicultural success was built on a strong bipartisan vision for a multicultural nation and a sound policy framework. A strong and prosperous future for our nation relies on a coordinated and cohesive approach to multiculturalism and multicultural communities across Australia.

This budget does not deliver this.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further revealed the serious health, economic and social failures of a fragmented and weakened approach to the systems and frameworks necessary to upholding multiculturalism. The pandemic has also presented an opportunity to review how governments and communities can work collaboratively.

In learning from the consequences of COVID-19 as well as the reality of Australia's increasing diversity, Australia cannot afford to overlook the benefits of investing in whole of government approach to multiculturalism or the risks in a fragmented approach.

Budget 2022-23

It is to be expected that this budget contains numerous new initiatives to support the Australian population as a whole, **including** those from multicultural backgrounds.

FECCA is, however, disappointed by the relatively limited budget measures which specifically address the particular needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

Whilst there are welcome targeted measures in some portfolios, for example in health, many Portfolio Budget Statements are silent on initiatives supporting these communities.

The budget therefore fails to demonstrate a consistent and coherent whole of government approach to multiculturalism.

Analysis

Scope

This analysis is limited to those measures announced in the Australian Government's 2022-23 Budget which are **specifically relevant** to Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. It draws on the Budget Papers and the Portfolio Budget Statements.

1. Human Rights

A robust human rights framework is essential to safeguarding a fair and just multicultural Australia. Reduced funding for the

Australian Human Rights Commission is of significant concern for multicultural Australia. Of immediate concern to FECCA is that this will likely jeopardise the establishment and implementation of a national anti-racism strategy.

- The Australian Human Rights Commission will see its budget cut by over one third over the forward estimates: from \$32.6 million in the estimated actual expenditure for 2021-22 to \$20 million in 2025-26.

1. Migration and Citizenship

Migration Program

- Redistribution of 10,000 places in the 2021-22 Migration Program from the Partner visa category within the Family stream to the Skill stream, thereby increasing the Skill stream ceiling from 79,600 to 89,600. This redistribution recognises the sharp fall in the number of on-hand Partner visa applications and will further support the economic recovery by increasing the places available for skilled visa holders.
- The Government will maintain the 2022-23 permanent Migration Program planning level at 160,000. Skill stream places will increase from the 2021-22 planning levels to 109,900, and account for around 70 per cent of the permanent Migration Program. Partner visa granting arrangements will move to a demand-driven basis going forward.

Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants

- \$0.5 million to establish the Ukrainian Community and Settlement Support Program to provide additional support to those arriving in Australia after fleeing Ukraine
- \$665.9 million over 4 years from 2022-23 for an additional 16,500 humanitarian places for Afghan nationals across the 4 years from 2022-23, to address the anticipated need for places.
- \$10 million in a single year of top-up funding for Program Assisting Survivors of Torture and Trauma to continue to meet forecast demand for support to humanitarian entrants and survivors of torture and trauma.
- \$9.2 million in 2022-23 to extend existing Youth Transition Support services for 12 months to 30 June 2023, to continue the provision of services to young humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants to increase engagement in education and community sport and assist in transition to employment.

1. Language Services

- \$2 million to ensure that privately employed allied health care providers can access the Australian Government's Free Interpreting Services (FIS) to support services to patients with low English proficiency.
- \$0.6 million to fund a scoping study into the supply and demand for Auslan and spoken language interpreter services for people who are deaf.
- \$4.4 million over 4 years from 2022-23 to improve access to allied health services for deaf and non-English speaking Australians and ensure the future allied health workforce can meet the needs of the community.
- \$7.8 million to ensure Translating and Interpreting Services are available through Primary Health Network-commissioned mental health services, removing a significant barrier to accessing these services for CALD Australians.
- \$44.7 million to continue driving improvements and to deliver accessible aged care information that meets the needs of all Australians.

1. Health and Aged Care

The Health Portfolio Budget Statement establishes (page 27) under the heading *Post-COVID health check-ups* "a CALD Health Advisory Group, which will leverage engagement with CALD communities into important health messaging. This will ensure people from a wide variety of backgrounds, and with an equally diverse range of health needs, receive timely and tailored health information through an investment of \$10.6 million."

FECCA successfully advocated for the establishment in late 2020 of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group. The advice of this Group has led to significantly improved engagement; communications and messaging, and data collection. FECCA has subsequently asked for a similar group to be formed which could provide advice across the Health Department on broader multicultural health and wellbeing issues.

It is not clear whether the Health Portfolio Budget Statement is referring to a new Advisory Group or to the existing COVID-19 Advisory Group.

CALD specific measures include:

Women's Health

- \$1.7 million to address the impacts of female genital mutilation/cutting which primarily affects migrant women in Australia.
- \$4.2 million for grants to fund community-led initiatives and organisations to support the health of vulnerable Australian women and girls, with a focus on priority populations including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, migrant and refugee women, ageing women and women with disability

Mental Health

- \$547.0 million for targeted initiatives, including for young Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and multicultural communities.
- \$7.8 million to ensure translating and interpreting services are available through PHNs-commissioned mental health services, removing a significant barrier to accessing these services for CALD Australians

Preventive Health

- \$10.6 million over 2 years from 2022-23 to develop and implement a preventive health communication campaign, focused on early intervention and prevention of chronic disease targeted at culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
- \$5.9 million to support priority populations, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD) communities, to catch up on missed health screening opportunities

COVID-19

- \$800.8 million over 2 years from 2021-22 for the administration of primary and booster doses in primary care settings, pharmacies, aged and disability care facilities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Genomics

Most current genomic reference data bases are predominantly Anglo/Celtic-centric.

- \$28.1 million over 4 years from 2022-23 to establish Genomics Australia from 1 January 2024 to drive the translation and integration of genomics into the Australian healthcare system

Aged Care

- There are no new initiatives relating specifically to the aged care needs of older Australians from multicultural backgrounds, despite these people being identified under the current *Aged Care Act 1997* as a group with special needs. There is, for example, no additional funding for language services in the sector.
- There is no provision for improvements in the pay and conditions of the aged care workforce, at least 50% of which are workers from multicultural and migrant backgrounds.

1. Other Portfolios

Sport

- \$4.4 million over 2 years from 2022-23 to Cricket Australia to deliver multicultural participation programs that support the legacy objectives of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2022

Domestic Violence

- \$104.4 million from 2022-23 to continue and expand the role of the national prevention organisation Our Watch, to improve its reach in diverse communities including the LGBTIQ+ community, the disability community and those with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
Additional funding of \$9.0 million in 2022-23 is being provided to continue a range of community-based prevention activities, including Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) integrated referral programs, support pathways for women with disability experiencing violence, and supporting men as new parents.