

# Appeal for all political parties to engage in a respectful, informed and reasonable debate on refugee issues

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), as the peak national body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, urges all political parties to engage in a respectful, informed and reasonable debate on refugee issues, and ensure that the discourse does not marginalise this vulnerable group.

This appeal is particularly relevant in view of the comments made by the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Peter Dutton, relating an increase of the refugee intake resulting in 'illiterate and innumerate' refugees taking Australia jobs.

FECCA Chairperson Joe Caputo said, "At FECCA we are calling for the discussion to be brought within the bounds of acceptable discourse. We are concerned that the current tone could incite division among communities in this very sensitive area."

"Historically, refugees have contributed to the social, cultural and economic fabric of the country, with Australia greatly benefiting from this unique composition."

Data from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship on the economic, social and civic contributions of first and second generation humanitarian entrants indicates that humanitarian entrants are the most entrepreneurial in Australia.

Humanitarian entrants tend to work several jobs in their first few years in Australia in order to finance their own business. They display greater entrepreneurial qualities compared to other migrant groups, with a higher than average proportion engaging in small and medium business enterprises.

Australian society is also enriched from a successful humanitarian programme via a number of non-economic contributions, such as mitigating our ageing local population, enhancing Australia's cultural and linguistic diversity, providing volunteering and social care roles and contributing to the development of rural and regional areas.

With growing global needs for refugee resettlement, FECCA reiterates our call for Australia to stand by our moral and international obligations and provide refugee resettlement, as well as ensure and contribute to protecting peace and security globally.

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