

FECCA raises concerns about extended waiting periods

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) says that a Bill introduced today to the Australian Parliament will discriminate against tens of thousands of Australian residents simply because they are new migrants.

The Government's *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Encouraging Self-sufficiency for Newly Arrived Migrants) Bill* aims to extend the waiting time for new migrants to access welfare benefits to three years from its current two years.

The Chairperson of FECCA, Ms Mary Patetsos said today that the move would impose considerable hardship.

"FECCA believes that this move will place more and more migrants at risk financially as they try to settle into Australia."

"We accept that the Bill contains exemptions for refugees and limited hardship cases but the reality is that more migrants, as a result of this legislation, will face further discrimination and unfairness."

"Migrants who come here have always needed time to establish themselves in housing and employment. These changes make it harder for them to settle in this country and FECCA appeals to the Parliament to reject the Bill," Ms Patetsos said.

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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