

FECCA welcomes government's expansion of English language program

FECCA welcomes the announcement by the Federal Government that it will introduce new measures to enhance social cohesion, including through the extension of the English language teaching program for migrants, and looks forward to engaging with the government on the details.

In his address to the National Press Club today, Acting Immigration Minister Alan Tudge announced changes to the Adult Migrant English Program, which would see the cap on class hours lifted and removal of the 5-year limit in which eligible students can access the scheme.

FECCA's research has shown that many new arrivals struggle to complete the program within their first five years in Australia at a time when they are dealing with other settlement priorities, such as employment, schooling, family obligations, trauma and housing.

[In a recent review](#) of community-based programs, FECCA found that flexibility in teaching is key. Less formal classes allow people to learn English while also socialising, thereby helping to combat isolation and loneliness, and build feelings of belonging.

"English alone is not an indicator of someone successful settlement, language fluency of course assists settlement and participation. Many post war migrants are model citizens many of whom still have very limited English." Ms Patetsos said.

Minister Tudge also said the government would embark on a campaign "articulating our national identity, our multicultural success and the Australian values which underpin our nation" and will "place a greater emphasis on Australian citizenship".

Recognising the contribution of the nation's culturally and linguistically diverse communities is key to social cohesion, while embracing diverse cultures can help ensure a successful multicultural society.

Minister Tudge also announced the Australian citizenship test will include new questions on Australian values, and the Australian Values Statement will be updated to reflect "the importance we place on the values that define and shape our country and culture".

"Many of these values are universal values that build cohesive communities, and are shared by all cultures. However, we need to make sure additional barriers to citizenship are not being put in place," Ms Patetsos said.

For interviews contact: 0401 125 370 or media@fecca.org.au