

MYEFO 2015-16 measures will hurt migrant partners and children of Australian citizens and permanent residents

Joint statement by the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), National Welfare Rights Network and National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA).

The government is proposing to save \$225 million over four years by removing exemptions from the Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period for new migrants who are family members of Australian citizens or permanent residents from 1 January 2017.

The effect of this is to reduce support for new Australian families. This is short sighted policy that affects vulnerable families facing the challenges of adapting to life in a new country, just when they need more support not less. Supporting new migrants to Australia benefits the whole community.

Under the current law, new migrants to Australia generally have to wait two years after the grant of their permanent visa before they can access most income support payments. However there are some exemptions from this two year Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period (NARWP), which include an exemption for a person who is a family member of an Australian citizen or permanent resident (of at least two years). This exemption is mainly for partners or children of an Australian citizen or permanent resident. Other people may be treated as family members, but in practice this is rare.

In our experience, this measure will mainly affect partners of Australian citizens or permanent residents. Its effect will be to reduce support to these families at a critical time, increasing financial stress and hardship.

We call on the government not to proceed with this proposal.

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