

Proposal to change 18C announced on Harmony Day is an insult to multicultural Australia

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils today expressed its dismay following the Government's announced proposal to change Section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act (RDA)*.

FECCA's Chairperson, Joe Caputo said: "The proposed changes to the *RDA* send a strong signal that racism is acceptable".

The Government plans to replace the words "insult, offend and intimidate" with "harass".

"I would ask the Prime Minister what insulting, offending and intimidating words about Australia's ethnic minority communities does he feel should be allowed?" said Mr Caputo.

Mr Caputo emphasised: "Today, Australia celebrates Harmony Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It is an affront to Australia's diverse community – that on this day – the Government is proposing to weaken protections against racism."

"Australia's international reputation as a strong, successful multicultural and multi-faith community is threatened by this proposal," he said.

Mr Caputo continued: "There has been a palpable increase in hostility toward certain minority groups in Australia which promotes feelings of exclusion and fear in the community. The *Racial Discrimination Act* – as it stands – provides protection for vulnerable communities against racial attacks while defending the right to freedom of speech."

"Australia's harmonious and vibrant multicultural society should be a source of tremendous national pride," said Mr Caputo. "Migration to Australia has enriched the lives of all Australians, as well as our economy and society. We need to do all we can to protect it. FECCA and the diverse communities that we represent will fight this proposal."

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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