

# Proposed Voter ID changes creates barriers for multicultural communities to vote

FECCA is both baffled and concerned over the proposed Voter ID reforms and the impact of these on vulnerable communities.

The proposed changes will create extra burdens for multicultural communities, refugees, and those whose primary language is not English. These communities often face many hurdles in proving their identity and struggle to provide formal documentation.

“Many members of our community have tried for years to resolve formal name and identity issues—and some remain unresolved for reasons outside their control. Proof of Identity requirements will disenfranchise and create hesitancy among new and emerging communities in exercising their democratic right to vote; voter hesitancy and disincentive will be a problem,” said FECCA Chairperson Mary Patetsos.

“These changes will also hinder the Government’s efforts in encouraging multicultural communities to actively participate in Australia’s democracy and vote at elections,” said Ms. Patetsos.

“It is unclear what problem the changes are trying to fix. The public have high confidence in the integrity of the Australian Electoral Commission and the voting system in Australia, voter fraud has never featured as a problem.” said Ms. Patetsos.

Furthermore, the AEC revealed just this week, during a Senate estimates hearing, that only 2100 instances of multiple voting had been exposed in 2019, many being unintentional errors. The AEC said the number represents only 0.01 per cent of all ballots cast.

“Clearly, this type of electoral fraud is not happening on a scale that requires changes in legislation, and we are deeply concerned about the unintended consequences for our communities.” Ms. Patetsos said.

“This Bill will disenfranchise voters from Culturally Linguistic and Diverse backgrounds (CALD) along with many vulnerable groups. Instead, we should be investing in education campaigns to encourage people, especially vulnerable communities, to vote at elections.”

The Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (FECCA) is Australia’s peak multicultural organisation representing and advocating on behalf of Australia’s culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

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