



Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia

**Pre-Budget Submission – Investing in a National
Multicultural Framework and a stronger future for
the nation**

25 January 2024



FECCA pays its respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present and recognise the land we live and work upon was never ceded.

FECCA acknowledges that our work on behalf of multicultural Australia has learnt from and been enriched by First Nations peoples and organisations. We are committed to continuing to listen, learn and support First Nations peoples in the journey to a more inclusive society.

Who we are

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national peak body representing people from multicultural communities and their organisations across Australia. Through the membership of state, territory, and regional councils, we represent over 1,500 community organisations and their members.

What we do

For over 40 years, FECCA has proudly worked alongside culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the broader Australian society and government to build a successful, productive and inclusive multicultural Australia where everyone, no matter their background or how long they have lived in this country, can belong equally and reach their full potential.

FECCA draws on the lived experiences of the people and their descendants who have migrated to Australia and the expertise of its extensive and diverse membership to develop and promote inclusive, innovative and responsible public policy that reflects the needs and perspectives of multicultural Australia. We are committed to building a strong, innovative and inclusive nation that harnesses its greatest strength, the diversity of its people.

The FECCA network is FECCA's greatest strength. Through our network we can enhance the capacity of governments to strengthen public policy to meet the needs of the diverse Australian population. FECCA is a proven trusted partner to both communities and government, operating as a sophisticated conduit by mobilising communities to work with government to develop and enrich public policy through community-led expertise and action.

Foreword

FECCA thanks the Treasury for the opportunity to provide a Pre-Budget submission. This submission is strongly aligned to our submission into the Government's Multicultural Framework Review. Additionally, it also highlights opportunities and areas of concerns drawn from the experiences of migrant and multicultural communities.

The model for a progressive National Multicultural Framework (the Framework) outlined in our submission would provide a key mechanism for building a strong, equitable and inclusive Australia. The model consists of 3 parts which include overarching recommendations, a multicultural policy approach based on 8 foundational pillars and the infrastructure/machinery-of-government required to support and deliver the framework and take Australia into the future as the most successful multicultural nation in the world. For your reference, a one-page outline of the proposed model for the Framework is at **Attachment A**. Our full submission can be accessed here: [Multicultural Framework Review - FECCA](#).

FECCA also joined forces with community sector partners to develop a Community Sector Statement for the Multicultural Framework Review. The Statement, based on the recommendations in FECCA's Multicultural Framework Review submission, has been signed by close to 100 organisations, demonstrating the commitment and unity of the sector to a path forward for a stronger more inclusive multicultural Australia. The Sector Statement can be accessed here: [Community Sector Statement](#)

In addition to this submission, we have worked with key stakeholders, including the Australian Council of Social Services; SSI; Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia); Settlement Council of Australia; Refugee Council of Australia; and the National Ethnic Disability Alliance to make a joint call for funding under the 2024-25 Budget building on the recommendations in the Sector Statement. This has been submitted as a separate joint Pre-Budget submission which can be accessed here: [Sector pre-budget statement](#). For further enquiries, please contact FECCA CEO Mary Ann Baquero Geronimo at ceo@fecca.org.au or on (02) 6282 5755.

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Introduction

Cultural diversity is an important and defining aspect of the lived reality of the Australian nation. It is inextricably woven into our colonial and post-colonial history, our economy, our culture and our national identity. Multiculturalism must be a central focus to our future as a thriving, resilient, fair and inclusive nation.

Migration is the cornerstone of our vibrant and successful multicultural society. Migration continues to contribute to Australia's economic success and shape our society and our place in the world with people from across the globe arriving in Australia every year, bringing with them a rich diversity of backgrounds, life experiences, skills, and strengths. The 2021 Census shows that more than half of Australian residents (51.5 per cent) were born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas; and over 5.5 million Australians speak a language other than English at home.ⁱ

Australia embraces its growing diversity, with research showing that a very high proportion of the Australian population supports multiculturalism (88 per cent) and believe that migrants are good for the Australian economy (87 per cent).ⁱⁱ We must embed this support in a national vision and fully funded strategy for a strong and inclusive multicultural Australia.

The Multicultural Framework Review was established to “assess and make recommendations on the institutional arrangements, legislative and policy settings required to advance a multicultural Australia and meet the current and future needs of multicultural Australia at the Commonwealth level.”ⁱⁱⁱ The Government must back its commitment to multicultural Australia with significant and sustainable funding for the Framework. A fully funded Framework will provide the mechanism for a systematic and coordinated approach to ensuring our institutions and policy settings deliver social cohesion and economic inclusion to benefit all Australians.

An important element of a truly inclusive multicultural nation is a shared progressive vision and strength-based narrative at the core of our multicultural national identity. Commitment to this vision needs to be bipartisan and sit across all levels of government, civil-society and business sectors, which will in turn result in sustainable social cohesion. It's time to progress our multicultural identity and we need strong leadership from the Government as vocal proponents of a strength-based narrative on multiculturalism and migration.

Recommendations

FECCA makes the following recommendations, structured to align with our 3-part Multicultural Framework model submitted under the Multicultural Framework Review. Some recommendations are general in nature, others more specific and include attached supplementary proposals.

Part A: A shared progressive vision

Recommendation 1: Fund a co-designed national vision for multicultural Australia

To build social cohesion and foster a sense of pride and belonging among all Australians, the Government should invest in building a progressive, forward-looking narrative for our multicultural nation. Defining a shared narrative is the pathway to strengthening social cohesion, highlighting our shared values and aspirations and fostering a fair and inclusive Australia.

To be truly meaningful, such a narrative should come from all Australians – First Nations peoples, multicultural communities and the broader Australian community. The co-design process with these three cohorts will bring together the diversity of the nation to create a national narrative that all Australians can relate to and see themselves reflected in, under a united vision.

We call upon the Government to partner with appropriate organisations and fund the co-design of a national narrative with multicultural communities, First Nations communities and the broader community. The co-design process should be anchored by organisations that have strong ties to, and truly represent their communities. Drawing from a membership of 1500+ multicultural organisations and their members, FECCA is well-placed to lead consultations and co-design the narrative with multicultural communities.

Part B: Multicultural Architecture

Multiculturalism impacts the entire domain of the Government, and machinery-of-government should reflect this reality. Strengthening and deepening multiculturalism should be embedded in a way that delivers a whole-of-government approach with central coordination and appropriate investment in co-design, genuine partnerships with multicultural community organisations, policy design, service delivery, and regulatory and other mechanisms.

Recommendation 2: Invest in machinery-of-government to support multicultural Australia

2.1 Establish an Office for Multicultural Australia

Establish and provide ongoing funding to an Office for Multicultural Australia to lead Australia's efforts to build a stronger, more inclusive nation by working across government to provide a cohesive, effective and efficient approach to implementing the Multicultural Framework.

A renewed commitment to multiculturalism through the establishment of a standalone Office for Multicultural Australia will reaffirm the Government's genuine commitment to building a successful nation where everyone in Australia can contribute and benefit from the social and economic wealth of the nation and safeguard the social cohesion and prosperity of Australia for generations to come.

An Office for Multicultural Australia would:

- Develop a national Multicultural Framework.
- Ensure consistency and coherence of the implementation of Australia's Multicultural Framework and Action Plans across all government portfolios through coordination across the design and implementation of policies, programs, laws and regulations.
- Work across government to mainstream consideration of the needs and perspectives of multicultural Australia into decision-making.
- Develop annual Multicultural Budget statements.
- Fund and support a community-led Multicultural Advisory Council.
- Support regular Multicultural Ministers Meetings consisting of State and Territory ministers, led by the Commonwealth.
- Strengthen the Multicultural Access and Equity Policy and ensure mandatory government implementation across all service delivery.
- Design and implement consistent and accurate measures of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity across data collection.

To successfully fulfill its purpose, the Office for Multicultural Australia must be extricated from the Home Affairs department and its focus on national security. The Office must have independence to coordinate and review approaches across the whole of government without having to negotiate and navigate its purpose and role within a huge portfolio for which the focus and structure is spread across a vast range of issues, many of which are externally focussed, rather than working with the whole of government, civil society and the Australian community to foster social harmony.

2.2 Establish a Multicultural Act

As a multicultural nation, Australia has several instruments to support an inclusive society that protects its citizens regardless of cultural or ethnic background, like the existing anti-discrimination laws such as *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* and the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1999*. However, these have proven inadequate to

addressing institutional prejudice and barriers to ensure a truly inclusive and fair Australia. It is important to recognise the role of unconscious racial bias that permeates policy frameworks and practices negatively affecting policy outcomes for multicultural communities.^{iv} While laws cannot completely drive social change, they can reflect the values that inform our actions and goals as a society.^v Establishing a multicultural Act that enshrines in law the values, aspirations, and attitudes and standards of a multicultural Australia would assist in addressing systemic barriers to social, cultural and economic recognition and inclusions many multicultural communities face, and lead to a more productive and cohesive Australia.

Several states and territories have enacted legislation and/or policies to promote multicultural values. A Federal Act would provide an overarching national legal framework for multiculturalism, which would deliver a nationally consistent approach to multicultural Australia. Enacting a Federal Multicultural Act would be in line with recommendation 9 by the Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism 2017 report, which recommended developing and implementing a Federal Multicultural Act to enshrine agreed principles of multiculturalism and support and frame multiculturalism in Australia.^{vi} The enactment of the Act will reaffirm Australia's official support for multiculturalism.

2.3 Elevate the minister responsible for the multicultural portfolio to Cabinet

The Cabinet is the focal point of the decision-making process of the Government. Elevating the minister responsible for the multicultural portfolio to Cabinet would allow them to have greater influence over decision-making across government rather than just within their own portfolio. This would also support mainstreaming consideration of the needs and aspirations of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds across all areas of government.

2.4 Establish an independent Multicultural Commission and Commissioner

To promote multiculturalism as a core Australian value, the Government should establish a Multicultural Commission and appoint a Multicultural Commissioner. This would demonstrate political leadership and commitment at the highest level to multicultural Australia being central to the future growth of a fair and prosperous nation.

Commissioners provide leadership, raise awareness and understanding, raise the profile of challenges and strengths and facilitate coordination and cooperations across sectors and governments to achieve better outcomes. The Multicultural Commissioner would liaise between the public and government to progress the issues and vision of multicultural communities. They would lead the coordination of implementation of the Multicultural Framework across Commonwealth and State, Territory and Local Governments, the private sector and the wider community, and play a role in monitoring and reporting on progress, making recommendations where necessary.

2.5 Multicultural Budget Statements

Identified Budget Statements are a well-established strategy for achieving better outcomes for a particular group or issue. For example, the Women's Budget Statement assists in efforts to achieve gender equality by focusing on the impact of government investment, with the intention that gender equality is improved when fiscal policies and administrative procedures are structured to address inequality.

The same approach can be adopted to design inclusive budgets targeted at addressing inequalities for multicultural communities in all new government measures. Annual Multicultural Budget Statements that align to the Multicultural Framework would be a concrete step towards including multicultural communities, as well as provide a mechanism for early identification of any unintended consequences from potential Budget measures. A Multicultural Budget Statement would also work towards ensuring the needs and aspirations of multicultural communities are more consistently embedded across the work of all Commonwealth portfolios. By shining a light on its economic and social policies and budgetary decisions that

support multicultural communities, the Government would give a clearer public demonstration of its commitment to an inclusive multicultural nation.

2.6 Establish a community-endorsed Multicultural Advisory Council

People from multicultural backgrounds are often underrepresented in the decisions that directly concern them. This has significantly impacted the ability of policies and programs to provide sustainable outcomes for multicultural communities. Establishing an independent, community-endorsed Multicultural Advisory Council to provide advice to government would ensure the lived experience and expertise of a diverse multicultural Australia is embedded into the work of the Government. This Council would be made up of representatives from across multicultural Australia, including community leaders, academics, and business leaders, all of whom have the respect, trust and authority of their communities.

A Multicultural Advisory Council would play an important role in ensuring that the Government's policies and programs are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all Australians, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background. It would also provide a platform for multicultural communities to have their voices heard and demonstrate the Government's commitment to multiculturalism and its recognition of the importance of diversity to our nation.

2.7 Establish Commonwealth Multicultural Action Plans

To truly advance multicultural Australia we need more than a vision. Strong leadership is needed from the Government in the form of significant funding to implement the Multicultural Framework through Action Plans across all Commonwealth agencies, with defined targets and measures, to be periodically reviewed. Strategic investment in targeted efforts that respond to Australia's multicultural diversity, reduce barriers to access, and focus on national priorities such as building social cohesion, addressing service delivery gaps, reducing barriers to employment and eliminating institutional racism for example, will deliver results and be far more effective than ad hoc, piecemeal and reactive measures.

Part C: Multicultural policy pillars

A fair and inclusive society - the foundation of social cohesion

A fair and inclusive nation where everyone is entitled to equality of treatment and opportunity and can contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia free from discrimination, will provide the foundation for strong and enduring social cohesion.

A nation that actively invests in recognising the value of its diversity and ensuring that everyone, regardless of their culture, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, visa status, geography, class, gender identity or age, has equal rights and opportunities, is a nation that can build sustainable social cohesion.

Responsibility for achieving a fair and inclusion society rests with the entire nation, including governments, public and private institutions, business, communities and individuals. This requires strong and sustained leadership from all sectors, and most importantly, from the Government. Political leaders must embody the values and be vocal proponents of a strength-based narrative on multiculturalism and migration.

Recommendation 3: Maintain commitment to First Nations self-determination

FECCA continue to stand as firm allies to the First Nations peoples of Australia. We urge the Government to remain committed to self-determination for First Nations peoples and the calls for action to Close the Gap in outcomes for communities and to deliver on Voice, Treaty and Truth. As with multicultural communities, First Nations communities are best placed to recognise and communicate their needs and aspirations, and Government policy and action must genuinely engage and reflect what First Nations Australians have asked for. We commend the Government's commitment to pursuing the first reform of Voice and call for the continued support of the self-determination and sovereignty of First Nations people.

Recommendation 4: Fund the implementation of the National Anti-racism framework

The opportunity for all to live free from racism and discrimination forms the basis of a fair and inclusive society that encourages full participation from its members and supports sustainable social cohesion. We welcome the Government's commitment to developing the National Anti-Racism Framework and call upon the Government to provide sufficient funding to fully implement the Framework across the whole-of-government.

Inclusive policy design

In recognition of Australia's growing diversity, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds should be at the centre of policy design, to reflect and respond to their diverse needs and aspirations. Inclusive policymaking means enriching decision-making with lived experience, expertise and localised knowledge. Inclusive policy design leads to better outcomes and stronger, more inclusive policies, programs and services.

Recommendation 5: Provide capability development and sustainable funding for multicultural community organisations

Multicultural organisations provide more than community services. They are places where people from multicultural communities can find connections and develop a sense of belonging to community. They provide a suite of tangible and intangible supports and benefits to multicultural communities. These include harnessing the protective factors of culture and community, providing culturally safe and accessible assistance to navigate the social, civic and economic institutions of Australia, and are trusted sources of information. They also play an important role in building social cohesion across culturally and linguistically diverse communities and the broader Australia community.

Multicultural community organisations serve as a bridge between government and communities and ensure the diverse range of experiences, perspectives and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse people are meaningfully included in policy and practice design. Government investment in partnership with these organisations will allow the facilitation of meaningful co-design with communities, tapping into their knowledge and strengths and leading to more equitable outcomes.

The Government must recognise the central role played by multicultural community organisations in creating a successful multicultural nation. This requires sustainable and sustained funding for multicultural community organisations and peak bodies. Funding must go beyond service delivery to include investment in organisation capability and capacity building to ensure the current and emerging needs of communities are continuously met, and to support ongoing collaboration and trust as the foundations of genuine partnerships between communities and the Government.

Access and equity to services

Access and equity are essential for providing inclusive services that meet the needs of diverse groups and help people fully participate in their communities and economies. This must include identifying and removing barriers to participation and contribution for everyone irrespective of their cultural, ethnic, religious, or linguistic background and ensuring inclusion and equity for all, as well as boosting the cultural safety and appropriateness of services.

Recommendation 6: Invest in access and equity

Australia's Multicultural Access and Equity Policy sets out to ensure that Government programs and services meet the needs of all Australians, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It acknowledges that Government services and programs must be responsive to the needs of our culturally diverse communities.

People from multicultural backgrounds continue to face barriers to accessing services across government agencies. Barriers to access can include a lack of or inadequate in-language information; lack of information in plain English and distributed in formats that are accessible; increased reliance on online provision of services as opposed to face-to-face service provision; limited awareness and use of the national Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS) and other interpreting and translating services by users and mainstream service providers; and limited cultural competency among front-line staff, amongst other challenges.

Moreover, the emphasis on individuals' capabilities to advocate for themselves in areas such as the NDIS and the future aged care system, if not accompanied by investment in education about rights, advocacy and support to navigate the Australian service systems, might amplify inequities in access to services.

Accessibility and equity are essential to ensure inclusive services that meet the needs of diverse groups and help people to fully participate in their communities and in the economy. They require identifying and removing barriers to participation and contribution for everyone irrespective of their cultural, ethnic, religious, or linguistic background.

The Government's commitment to a renewed, strengthened, well-informed, strong, and transparent approach to multicultural access and equity must be implemented across all levels of government, including the Commonwealth, states and territories and local governments, and extend to outsourced services. The approach must include a comprehensive:

- Access and Equity Framework
- Access and Equity standards
- Access and Equity accountability mechanisms

Recommendation 7: Invest in culturally responsive aged care for all

As documented by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, the existing aged care system has failed in the delivery of equitable, safe and culturally appropriate aged care services. As part of the aged care reform, a new legislation has been proposed (new Aged Care Act).^{vii} The new legislation adopts a rights-based, person-centred approach. It lists, amongst its objects, ensuring equitable access to aged care services, and it creates mechanisms to support individuals to obtain information and make decisions through individualised roles.

In achieving its object of equitable access, the Government must ensure that culturally appropriate aged care services are effectively available so that multicultural communities have options to choose what fits their needs. As the NDIS experience has shown, addressing thin markets is critical to make self-determination an actual option for multicultural communities, especially for those residing in regional and rural areas.

The implementation of the aged care reform will be complex and people from multicultural communities will need targeted support to understand the new rules, navigate the aged care system, know about their rights and options of services, and advocate for themselves. Investing in culturally safe and responsive navigation support services remains essential, as a form of providing face-to-face, individualised assistance for those entering the system.

Government funding is also needed to support ongoing capacity building initiatives that help to increase the community education around the aged care system, as well as about rights, mechanisms for complaints, and access to independent, professional culturally responsive advocates. The funding, if sustained, could enable a broader approach to health and service education and advocacy, that would include access to the NDIS, and help to create a workforce that is properly trained to deliver support on a regular basis.

A culturally responsive aged care system can only become a reality if the workforce in aged care is well prepared and adequately valued for their skills, including bicultural expertise. Investment in their professional development and retention must happen so that the relational aspects of high-quality care can be realised.

Recommendation 8: Invest in prevention and health equity

By 2024 the Australian population has become more culturally and linguistically diverse, and migration will continue to define the future of our nation. Still, there is little understanding of how public investment in health, including in the health care system, can be effectively applied to enhance the prospects of healthy living for all, including for multicultural communities.

Australia's excellence in health research and its strong health care system are internationally recognised, however, there continues to be an unacceptable gap in knowledge about the health needs and diverse life-long health trajectories of migrants and refugees in Australia.

The investment required to address this gap needs to be consistent and long term. Priority areas for the Government include improving health data classification and collection to allow for disaggregated analysis beyond the 'CALD' category, support for participation of multicultural communities in research and clinical trials, as well as investment in health education, including preventive health. At the same time, the Government must ensure that health workforce have the preparation and capabilities to deliver culturally safe and responsive health care.

The National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030 acknowledges people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds amongst the priority populations that often experience an avoidable higher burden of disease, when compared to the rest of the Australian population. However, they have not been identified as part of the Strategy's health equity targets. The Government must ensure that investment in the implementation of the National Preventive Health Strategy, as well as of other national health strategies, is directed to reduce inequities for all priority populations, ensuring that progress for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is also measured.

Recommendation 9: Invest in services that meet the needs of people with disability from multicultural backgrounds

Culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability experience disproportionate violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation and face greater barriers accessing information and communications.^{viii} Consistent with the findings of the Disability Royal Commission, the Government should invest in ensuring policies and programs provide access and equity to people with disability and support their needs, including ensuring services and support is culturally safe and appropriate. In addition, the NDIS Review strongly recommended bolstering navigation support for all people with disability to mainstream, community and disability supports and inclusion inside and outside of the NDIS.^{ix} The Government response to these two major policy reviews must include ensuring that policies and programs are co-designed with culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability, their representative organisations and their supporters. All co-design processes must be adequately resourced, accessible and provided with sufficient time. Data collection on the specific needs of culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability and their usage of services, must also be enhanced with an intersectional focus on multiculturalism and disability across all areas of government. As such, we support the call for the establishment of a Disability Reform Implementation Council that includes representation of culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability and their organisations.

Effective communication

Effective communication is a two-way process that involves clear messages, delivered via appropriate platforms, tailored for diverse audiences, and shared by trusted people. The increasing use of digital

platforms as alternative communication channels has increased access for many in the Australian population. However, for some, it has also created vulnerabilities and barriers, particularly for people from multicultural backgrounds who face barriers to accessing technology including those with limited English and/or limited understanding of digital platforms.

Recommendation 10: Invest in building media literacy in all multicultural communities

Studies show some culturally and linguistically diverse communities are at risk of higher exposure to online scams, mis- and dis-information, particularly among non-English speakers. Spreading mis- and dis-information in media and social media about minority communities further promotes marginalisation and hate speech and undermines social cohesion and Australia's vision and aspiration as a progressive and inclusive multicultural nation. It also amplifies the disproportionate impact of the ongoing housing and cost of living crises on people from multicultural communities. Government support is an important pillar to empower communities to combat the impacts of scams, mis- and dis-information and to develop the capabilities to proactively deal with bad-faith campaigns.

FECCA's current partnership with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts to support media literacy in multicultural communities will deliver targeted co-design strategies to build their understanding of, and resilience to mis and dis-information by critically engaging with information publicised through various media channels and developing capacity to identify false narratives to reduce vulnerability to associated harms. It will be important to make the strategies and learnings available to all multicultural communities so that everyone can benefit from this investment.

See supplementary proposal at **Attachment B** to apply the knowledge, learnings and community strategies developed in the above partnership through a broader multicultural media literacy awareness-raising campaign.

Full participation

To build and maintain strong and inclusive societies, it is crucial to create conditions that support the active participation of all members in the civic, social, economic, and political realms of the nation.

Recommendation 11: Invest in supporting the full participation of all migrants under a reinvigorated National Settlement Framework

Settlement is a crucial process for new migrants as they seek to navigate, establish, and become independent in a new country. The provision of tailored, culturally appropriate, and inclusive services and support to make the settlement experience swift, and efficient will ensure the nation quickly benefits from the extensive economic, cultural and social participation of migrants.

FECCA recommends the Government reinvigorate the National Settlement Framework and ensure it is well resourced to support both its development and implementation. The Framework should be re-developed and implemented in consultation with Commonwealth, State and Territory and Local Governments; service providers; the community sector; and migrant communities. The Framework should align with other relevant government reforms and frameworks such as the National Multicultural Framework; the Migration Strategy; National Anti-Racism Framework and Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities. The reinvigorated Framework should include a focus on the impact of intersectionality, serve the increasing diversity of migrant communities, and meet both the current and future needs of Australia.

Alongside the National Settlement Framework, we call on the Government to develop and fund a national program, co-designed with and delivered by multicultural and ethnic community organisations, to provide coordinated support and connection for non-humanitarian migrants to access essential information and

services to assist migrants to successfully participate in the social, civic and economic realms of Australia. These support services and information could include workplace rights and entitlements, childcare, transport, domestic violence, NDIS, education, language support, MyGov and First Nations culture and history. Currently, refugees and only a very small number of migrants are eligible for settlement support, leaving most migrants without the assistance that would make the transition much more efficient. Making support available to all new arrivals will provide all migrants, no matter where they come from or on what visa, with equitable opportunities to quickly settle and contribute to Australian society and the economy.

A supplementary proposal on FECCA's Arrive and Thrive program to support all migrants is at **Attachment C**.

Empowered communities

Empowered communities are associated with higher levels of social cohesion and stronger economies. Investing in building the resilience and capability of multicultural communities and community organisations will deliver stronger and more sustainable communities that are better placed to respond to future challenges.

Recommendation 12: Invest in disaster prevention, response and recovery in culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Building community capability and knowledge is crucial to ensuring that communities are better prepared to reduce disaster risk, emergency-aware, and will enhance community resilience over time. While individuals and communities have a role to play in reducing disaster risk and building on their already existing resilience, they need strong and appropriate support from the Government before, during and after emergencies.

Recent events like the COVID-19 pandemic have exposed the disproportionate vulnerabilities of multicultural communities, due to factors which impact community resilience towards unexpected disasters. This is particularly evident in new migrants and refugees, where factors such as unfamiliarity with the social and physical environment of their new home, lack of social capital or engagement with community networks, and lack of trust in public institutions can exacerbate the aftermath of disasters.^x This vulnerability is perpetuated by Government policy frameworks and service delivery models that do not adequately understand or address the needs and perspectives of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia. This only leads to disproportionately worse social, economic and health outcomes for many Australians.

Support for culturally and linguistically diverse communities needs to be delivered based on an understanding of the unique needs, strengths, perspectives and structures of influence within these communities. For this to be effective, the government must ensure that emergency support efforts and pre-disaster preparations are tailored, culturally appropriate, and address the different needs and diversity within communities. This can only be achieved through co-design and working alongside multicultural communities, and would result in comprehensive, readily available and accessible information to build resilience when dealing with emergencies and natural disasters within multicultural communities.

See supplementary proposal to build resilience among culturally and linguistically diverse communities to be better prepared before, during, and after emergencies at **Attachment D**.

Recommendation 13: Invest in climate resilience in multicultural communities

In its Annual Climate Statement in 2023, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to "ensuring that all Australians benefit from the changes ahead."^{xi} Ensuring community voices are heard in the policy and program development process, and that communities are supported in place-based initiatives is the pathway to ensure all Australians benefit from the changes in the future.

International studies show multicultural communities are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.^{xii} In Australia, multicultural communities in urban and regional centres are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.^{xiii} Multicultural communities also lag in household-level decarbonisation efforts including participation in energy retrofits.^{xiv} In order to ensure that Australia's climate response leaves no one behind, the Department must build effective engagement with multicultural communities. This must also include building the capability of the community sector to adapt to the challenges and impacts of climate change to ensure these organisations can meet the needs and support their communities.

Currently, there are no specific programs engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the context of climate change. This is a significant gap. As shown by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the contexts and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities are unique and tailor-made engagements deliver the best possible outcomes. Culturally and linguistically diverse communities also have existing valuable assets including resilience, adaptive capacity and strong social networks. Activating this will go a long way in ensuring culturally and linguistically diverse communities can bridge the gap between their current vulnerabilities and future strengths.

See supplementary proposal to improve climate resilience among culturally and linguistically diverse communities and improve participation in Australia's mitigation strategies at Attachment E.

Language

Recommendation 14: Invest in language diversity and a national language policy

Language is central to culture, identity and the way in which we view and experience the world. Language is also central to allowing people to participate fully in family life, the community and the nation. Australia is not just an English-speaking nation made up of English-speaking communities and families. Australia is truly a multicultural nation with over 400 languages spoken across the country.^{xv} In 2021, 22.8 per cent of Australia's population spoke a language other than English at home, up from 21.8 per cent in 2016. Of those who spoke a language other than English at home, 71.8 per cent were first-generation Australians.^{xvi} Apart from English, the most spoken languages at home are Mandarin (2.7 per cent), followed by Arabic (1.4 per cent), Vietnamese (1.3 per cent), Cantonese (1.2 per cent) and Punjabi (0.9 per cent).^{xvii}

Maintaining, developing, and using one's own language is essential for preserving and practicing culture. It is more than a communication tool; it is the embodiment of a culture's soul, traditions, and community. Across Australia, for many families, language is a key part of their cultural identity, when language is lost, it becomes a loss of their identity.^{xviii} For many migrants, language is what has preserved their memories, identities and resilience.^{xix} Language preservation remains a challenge, with language advocates identifying that language neglect in Australia has caused a strain on families and communities by creating a generational disconnect and a loss of cultural asset and continuity.

Language diversity delivers better outcomes for migrants and the nation. Feeling safe and confident to discuss complicated and sensitive topics is a challenge for many people, especially when a person speaks a language other than English. It is important that languages other than English are viewed as an asset to the nation and an important part of access and equity to services and information and will foster inclusion and a sense of belonging for their speakers.

Within Australia there has been a persistent view that migrants should possess a high level of English language proficiency, with languages other than English having limited value to the nation. The lack of appreciation for the diversity of languages that are spoken in Australia is a missed opportunity. The languages now spoken across multicultural Australia offer cultural and economic assets that give our nation a global advantage, increasing its pool of knowledge, skills, expertise and perspectives.

To achieve a more successful multicultural nation, Australia needs a comprehensive official language policy. A holistic language policy would provide a comprehensive approach to fostering effective, appropriate and accessible communication resources, including English as a common and shared language and support and foster languages other than English. It would provide a framework for implementing second language education, supporting community language schools, professional language standards and facilitating quality and responsive in-language services encompassing community and professional interpreting and a well-remunerated bi-lingual, bi-cultural workforce.

Data and evidence

Recommendation 15: Invest in updating data standards to deliver evidence-based policy and programs for multicultural communities

Research is important to developing evidence and understanding. Currently research into issues impacting and shaping multicultural Australia is ad hoc and uncoordinated, leaving gaps in our evidence and understanding. Australia must meaningfully recognise and integrate lived experiences and expertise within the evidence base to ensure a comprehensive and holistic understanding of Australian multiculturalism.

There have been previous calls to the Government to lead the development of a national multiculturalism research agenda and establish an independent and well-funded body to provide strategic and coordinated research in all areas of multiculturalism. Such measures would affirm the Government's commitment to the multiculturalism agenda and help to inform better policy and practice.^{xx}

Data is also critical for developing and implementing effective policies, programs, and practices, and it strengthens evidence-based decision-making that benefits all Australians regardless of their backgrounds. Currently the Government does not collect comprehensive data on race and ethnicity, instead focusing on variables such as country of birth and language spoken at home. These variables do not accurately measure race and ethnicity, and they can lead to false assumptions and the inadequate allocation of resources. For example, the term culturally and linguistically diverse is often used to refer to a wide range of people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. However, this term can be misleading, as it does not consider the diversity within this group. The inconsistent collection and reporting of data on race, culture and ethnicity across all levels of government and sectors makes it difficult to track the progress and outcomes of programs and policies aimed at reducing ethnic socio-economic disparities and creating a more resilient and inclusive nation.^{xxi}

All multicultural data should have cross sector, nationally consistent data definitions and be situated within a robust data ecosystem covering data collection, storage, analysis, and dissemination and include concepts of data sovereignty to ensure people have ownership and control over the data that could identify them and a say in how it is used and presented.

See a detailed supplementary proposal on co-designing data standards and operationalising these standards to deliver better outcomes for multicultural communities at **Attachment F**.

Endnotes

- ⁱ <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/2021-census-nearly-half-australians-have-parent-born-overseas>
- ⁱⁱ Scanlon Foundation Research Institute's 2022 'Mapping Social Cohesion'
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/multicultural-framework-review/about-the-multicultural-framework-review>
- ^{iv} https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/Conference%20Papers_Publication%20layout%20Final_0.pdf
- ^v <https://doi.org/10.1177/002218569203400408>
- ^{vi} https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Strengthening_Multiculturalism/Multiculturalism/~media/Committees/multiculturalism_ctte/Final_Report/report.pdf
- ^{vii} [New Aged Care Act | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#)
- ^{viii} Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, 2023. *Our Vision for an Inclusive Australia and Recommendations*
- ^{ix} NDIS Review Working together to deliver the NDIS
- ^x Hanson-Easey, S., Every, D., Hansen, A. and Bi, P. 'Risk communication for new and emerging communities: The contingent role of social capital'. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*. Volume 28; pp. 620-628. 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2018.01.012>.
- ^{xi} [Annual Climate Change Statement 2023 \(dcceew.gov.au\)](#)
- ^{xii} Hansen, A., Bi, L., Saniotis, A. & Nitschke, M., 2013. Vulnerability to extreme heat and climate change: is ethnicity a factor?, *Global Health Action*, 6:1, DOI: [10.3402/gha.v6i0.21364](https://doi.org/10.3402/gha.v6i0.21364)
- ^{xiii} Hansen, A, Bi, P, Saniotis, A, Nitschke, M, Benson, J, Tan, Y, Smyth, V, Wilson, L, Han, G-S 2013 Extreme heat and climate change: Adaptation in culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Gold Coast, pp. 101.
- ^{xiv} Majumdar, A., 2023. *Energy Justice in Australia's Housing Decarbonisation Transition: Learning from Community Housing Retrofits* (Doctoral dissertation, RMIT University).
- ^{xv} <https://racismnoway.com.au/about-racism/australias-cultural-diversity/diversity-of-language/#:~:text=Languages%20other%20than%20English,-While%20English%20is&text=Collectively%2C%20Australians%20speak%20over%20400,and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20languages.>
- ^{xvi} [Census of Population and Housing](#)
- ^{xvii} *Ibid* 17
- ^{xviii} https://www.multilingualaustralia.org.au/_files/ugd/ea439e_c8c9e16d11a545858f5d0c749e00643d.pdf
- ^{xix} https://www.multilingualaustralia.org.au/_files/ugd/ea439e_2bd363d98e63427f8609c663d65fefe1.pdf
- ^{xx} https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Strengthening_Multiculturalism/Multiculturalism/~media/Committees/multiculturalism_ctte/Final_Report/report.pdf
- ^{xxi} <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10138746/#:~:text=In%20Australia%2C%20the%20government%20is,and%20language%20spoken%20at%20home>

Attachment A

A National Multicultural Framework to Advance Australia

PART 1 – Overarching Recommendations				PART 2 – Multicultural Architecture			
1. Set a progressive vision for multicultural Australia				1. Office for Multicultural Australia			
2. The Multicultural Framework must be founded on a human-rights approach and lived experience and expertise				2. Multicultural Act			
3. Australia’s Multicultural Framework must be a national framework				3. Minister for Multicultural Affairs elevated to Cabinet			
4. Australia’s migration programs must be embedded into the Multicultural Framework				4. Independent Commissioner and Commission			
5. The Framework must recognise multicultural communities are not homogenous				5. Multicultural Action Plans (for Commonwealth, states and territories)			
6. The Framework must recognise the importance of multicultural community organisations and that co-design is central to a successful multicultural Australia				6. Multicultural Budget Statements			
7. The Framework must be forward looking				7. Multicultural Advisory Council			
				8. Significant and sustainable funding			
PART 3 – Multicultural Policy Pillars							
The framework and its implementation will reinforce a re-envisioned multicultural narrative that is informed by lived-experience and expertise, is strengths-based, human-rights based, looks holistically at the life-course of migrants and supports an inclusive and resilient nation to take Australia into the future.							
Fair and inclusive society	Inclusive policy design	Access and equity to services	Effective communication	Full participation	Empowered communities	Language	Data and evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-racism framework • National Human Rights Act • Voice, Treaty Truth • Awards and recognition • Migration reforms • Citizenship • Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design • Community policy partnerships • Community advisory bodies • Meaningful engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and Equity framework • Access and Equity standards • Access and Equity accountability • Social security eligibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public broadcasting • Media literacy • Media representation • Digital literacy • Cultural literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs and skills development • Skills recognition • Employment • Workers’ rights • Migration reform • Leadership • Financial literacy • Civic participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector funding • Community development • Community leadership • Place-based strategies • Strong families • Community resilience • Retain and foster identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language policy • Language support • Professional language standards • Language recognition • Language fostering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National research agenda • National knowledge hub • Data ecosystem • Data sovereignty • Data definitions
<p>Cross-cutting consideration of intersectionality across all pillars: New and emerging communities; regional and remote communities; women; children; young people; older people; people with disability; faith and religion; communities with caste systems and people that identify as LGBTQIA+.</p>							



Attachment B

Supporting multicultural communities to develop media literacy to combat scams, mis-and dis-information

Proposal

This proposal is for **\$4 million** to boost the support provided to culturally and linguistically diverse communities to improve media literacy about scams, mis and dis-information. FECCA has a current partnership with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the Department) to support media literacy in multicultural communities through community-led initiatives. These initiatives will enable communities to co-design strategies to build their understanding of, and resilience to mis and dis-information by critically engaging with information publicised through various media channels and developing capacity to identify false narratives to reduce vulnerability to associated harms.

This proposal is to apply the learnings and strategies developed through the community-led initiatives delivered under the FECCA partnership with the Department, and deliver broader support for multicultural communities through a media literacy campaign using multiple media channels. This multimedia awareness campaign can be delivered in partnership with SBS.

Purpose

Studies show some culturally and linguistically diverse communities are at risk of higher exposure to online scams, mis- and dis-information, particularly among non-English speakers. Spreading mis- and dis-information in media and social media about minority communities further promotes marginalisation and hate speech and undermines social cohesion and Australia as a progressive and inclusive multicultural nation. It also reinforces the disproportionate impact that people from multicultural communities experience during the on-going housing and cost of living crises. Government support is an important pillar empowering communities to combat the impacts of scams, mis- and dis-information and develop the capability to proactively deal with such bad-faith campaigns.

Boosting the Department's commitment to supporting communities through a grants program, a multimedia awareness campaign developed in partnership with SBS will incorporate the learnings and community co-designed strategies developed through the grants program and will be delivered in a culturally appropriate manner, meeting the needs of various community groups in 60+ languages.

Rationale

Multicultural Australians are not a minority

Australia is a nation built on migration, and our population is becoming increasingly diverse. In 2021, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that 51.5 per cent of the Australian population was born overseas or speaks a language other than English at home.ⁱ This diversity is reflected in the country's culture, language, and religion and is a strong source of Australia's social and economic strength.

To respond to Australia's increasing multiculturalism, it is vitally important for the diversity of the Australian people and their needs and aspirations to be central to the formulation of the policies, programs and communications that affect them. This will ensure investment delivers fit for purpose, accessible and equitable outcomes for the entire population.

Multicultural communities are not homogenous

Multicultural communities are incredibly diverse, however they are often grouped together under the category of 'culturally and linguistically diverse' and treated as a homogenous cohort. This overlooks the

myriad of differences between communities, such as culture and language, and results in services and messages that do not connect with the intended audience. Communication can be made to reflect nuances to difference or incorporate communication preferences including communication methods, channels and styles, particularly when in-language services are limited to translated materials which are often ineffective in reaching intended audiences.

Diverse media consumption patterns within multicultural communities

The diversity of multicultural communities is reflected in the multitude of communication and media consumption patterns of certain groups. For example, studies show that migrant women indicated higher preference for online posts and community newspapers, while refugee women favour English classes and ethnic radio.ⁱⁱ Previous government efforts to communicate with communities have overlooked this myriad of differences, such as culture and language, and resulted in services and messages that do not connect with the intended audience, and translated information that does not accurately reflect the media consumption patterns of multicultural communities.ⁱⁱⁱ As a result, a sense of distrust in governments and institutions has developed, which research suggests is highly influential on information and media in multicultural communities. Communication should be made to reflect these nuances to difference or incorporate media consumption preferences including communication methods, channels and styles, to ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse communities are not excluded from information regarding disaster risk and emergency resilience.

Recognising Intersectionality

The Government's approach to multiculturalism must be founded on a recognition of intersectionality where being from a cultural and linguistic diverse background is not the only markers of diversity. The experiences and perspectives of people from multicultural backgrounds are also affected by other intersecting identity markers such as age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, class and religion, as well as other factors such as visa status and the area in which you live. These do not exist independently; each informs the other and can have overlapping and compounding effects on a person's life experiences.

Opportunity for the Government to improve outcomes

Government policy frameworks and service delivery models often do not adequately understand or address the needs and perspectives of multicultural communities in Australia. This has led to disproportionately worse social, economic and health outcomes for many Australians.

COVID-19 demonstrated how multicultural communities are largely absent from the overall emergency response approach which results in disproportionately negative outcomes. For example, data shows there have been almost three times as many COVID-19 related deaths among people who were born overseas, as compared to those born in Australia.^{iv} COVID-19 also demonstrated the benefits of investing in new ways, particularly those co-designed with communities, to ensure that all people in Australia have equitable access to information and services.

Targeted approaches deliver stronger results

Targeted community-led, strength-based, culturally informed approaches deliver the best results. Culturally and linguistically diverse communities can be hard to reach, particularly the most marginalised communities. During COVID-19, targeted communication strategies developed and delivered by grassroots community organisations were proven to be more effective in both reaching the intended audience and resulting in action in comparison to official national communication channels.

Implementation

FECCA will work closely with the Department and SBS to co-design a national multimedia awareness campaign that is culturally appropriate and meets the needs of various community groups in 60+ languages. The campaign will be evidence-based with insights from the community grants program already being

supported by the Department and executed by FECCA. SBS's audience data and insights, will also be applied to ensure maximum and effective reach of the campaign.

Following the success of SBS's multilingual Coronavirus portal launched in March 2020, which has received 11 million unique Australian visits accessing trusted in language information throughout the pandemic, SBS is continuing its commitment in serving multicultural communities with crucial trusted and updated information in their language.

SBS will manage the awareness campaign process from end to end, activating its various service offerings from strategy and insights, to translation, filming, animation, graphic design, voice-over, to media placements of produced assets.

In-language advertisements or community service announcements (CSA) can be strategically positioned in key audio language programs. Other possibilities are program sponsorship, in-program discussion piece, and social media amplification through dedicated in-language channels.

As a premium platform, SBS ONDEMAND also enables targeting specific audience profiles in language, which is critical in a holistic multimedia awareness campaign. SBS can manage media placements of the produced assets in other ethnic press and multicultural media on behalf of FECCA and the Department.

ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics. "Snapshot of Australia." ABS, 2021.

ⁱⁱ Lee, S. K., Sulaiman-Hill, C. M., and Thompson, S. C. 2013. "Providing health information for culturally and linguistically diverse women: priorities and preferences of new migrants and refugees." *Health promotion journal of Australia*. 24(2), 98–103. 102

ⁱⁱⁱ Polaron. CALD Co-Design Impact Report, 2021, 7.

^{iv} Stephanie, D. 'Government data reveals being born overseas increases your risk of dying from COVID-19 in Australia', 17 February, 2022. [Government data reveals being born overseas increases your risk of dying from COVID-19 in Australia - ABC News](#)

Attachment C

Arrive and Thrive: A better future for all

Proposal

Arrive and Thrive is a holistic, national support program to support the settlement journey of non-humanitarian entrants to be fast and efficient and deliver better outcomes for migrants and the broader Australian society. The program focuses on the provision of a consistent suite of information, support and services to assist new migrants to navigate, connect and thrive in their new communities. It also builds the capacity of government, industry and mainstream services to support migrants reach their potential in a new country and community.

Purpose

This program will provide new migrants with a consistent suite of support and services to assist them with settling, belonging, and contributing to the Australian nation and the greatest opportunities to reach their full potential. The program will also assist social cohesion and the broader Australian society benefitting from the social, cultural, and economic benefits of migration. .

Rationale

Migration is growing

Australia's permanent migration program planning levels increased significantly from 160,000 places in 2021-22, to 195,000 in 2022-23 and 190,000 in 2023-24. In addition to permanent migrants, as of October 2023, there have been 2.2 million temporary residents in Australia. People from across the world are arriving in Australia, bringing with them a rich diversity of backgrounds, life experiences, skills, and strengths. This also brings different levels of knowledge and ability to quickly connect, settle and thrive in Australia.

Support is important in the migration journey

An essential component of successful migration is building connection, community, and a sense of belonging. For many migrants to Australia this is done through joining established community associations that offer a suite of tangible and intangible supports and benefits such as building and harnessing the protective factors of culture and community and providing culturally safe and accessible assistance to navigate the social, civic and economic realms of Australia.

The impacts of limited or no support are far-reaching and can contribute to issues such as social and economic alienation, mental health challenges, domestic violence, worker exploitation, illegality, and civil non-compliance. Absence of support is frequently identified in research and FECCA member consultations as a crucial missing piece in assisting migrants to reach their full potential in Australia. For many, this lack of support can add years and unnecessary difficulties in their journey to fully contribute, settle, and thrive in their new nation.

Support is limited, not always appropriate or consistently available

Only a very small number of non-humanitarian migrants are eligible for settlement support. The majority are expected to build lives in Australia with almost no tailored formal assistance.

Multicultural community organisations step in and attempt to fill this gap, offering what support they can with limited resources. These associations are rarely able to access government grants due to their size, structure and capacity and usually rely on local ethnic/multicultural community organisations for essential support such as referrals to mainstream service providers, advocacy and/or connection to government services such as police and schools, education on Australian laws, or a physical location to meet in.

Mainstream government and non-government services are not always well equipped to work with new migrants and lack the cultural competency necessary to work effectively, particularly with migrants who may have considerable mistrust in government and government services.

The business and industry sector also play an important role in the experiences of migrants and there is considerable scope for them to be more responsible to supporting their migrant employees. The employment sector should be skilled and empowered to provide culturally appropriate information about life in Australia and referrals to multicultural associations to their newly migrated employees, which will not only benefit the employee, but also the employer as migrant workers will be given the support to settle and thrive more quickly, leading to stronger contribution and greater sustainability in the workplace.

Existing supports and services, either through multicultural or mainstream services, are not consistently available or accessible in terms of physical or cultural safety, or across all communities and in all locations. This can result in migrants being disadvantaged in their journey to belonging based on their ethnicity or the location in which they reside. This warrants consideration given the governments focus on regional migration.

International models of support

New Zealand has a Migrant Settlement and Integration Strategy to ensure that migrants and their families settle successfully, achieve their goals, and thrive in New Zealand.ⁱ Support focuses on employment and self-sufficiency, education and training, participation and inclusion, housing, and health and wellbeing. The government funds work across government and local communities to deliver settlement information and services.ⁱⁱ Support for migrants in New Zealand is not limited to humanitarian entrants.

Canada provides information and support services to new arrivals through the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) (Settlement Program. Canada works on the premise that for the economic, social and cultural benefits of immigration to be realised, migrants must integrate successfully into Canadian society. The Settlement Program plays a major role by assisting immigrants and refugees to overcome barriers specific to the migrant experience by providing appropriate information and services to address their needs and attain awareness of community and other resources to deal with settlement issues; gain knowledge about life in Canada; learn official languages; acquire knowledge and skills for adapting to life in Canada and make connections related to community and employment opportunities. IRCC funds the delivery of settlement programming across the country and outside Canada, and provides support for initiatives that contribute to the capacity enhancement of recipient organisations.

Multicultural community organisations are uniquely positioned as coordinators and capacity enhancers

The best way to support new migrants is to start with the community, not the individual. Multicultural community organisations are the backbone of Australia's migration experience, and often play a crucial step in developing broader connections across Australian society. Referred to as 'bonding capital', relationships between migrants of the same cultural, ethnic, religious, or linguistic background create a solid foundation for strong and trusting communities that support migrants to build safe and prosperous lives in Australia.

Multicultural community organisations have strong and enduring links to culturally and linguistically diverse communities across Australia, and are places of trusted, culturally appropriate support that are already delivering a range of formal and informal services to new migrants. The multicultural community sector, comprising of organisations and peak bodies such as FECCA, the Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA), are strongly positioned to develop and coordinate the roll-out of a capacity building program through their networks of multicultural and ethnic community organisations, and service providers to deliver a consistent suite of services, flexibly in a way that meets the specific needs of migrant communities across Australia.

The sector is not just well positioned to coordinate across the networks, the sector is also strongly connected across mainstream organisations and government. For example, FECCA demonstrated its ability as a trusted government and sector partner throughout the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, working to build the capacity of mainstream services to deliver important health messages and services to multicultural Australia. To deliver consistent supports and services to new migrants, FECCA could also work collaboratively with our sector stakeholders to develop a capacity building package for mainstream sector and government organisations, and to industry, who as employers, play an important role in supporting migrant employees.

Implementation

PILLAR 1: Thriving in Australia

To assist migrants to quickly and successfully settle, belong and contribute to the Australian nation, they must be provided with essential orientation information and ongoing navigation, coordination, and connection to services.

All migrants should have the opportunity to learn about Australia and Australian systems and services in a way that is culturally safe, nuanced, and builds connections for ongoing formal and informal support. The level of individual support that a new migrant need will vary greatly, however migrants should be well informed as to the available options and be able to choose the level of support that best suit them.

While tailored to local contexts and communities, the type and level of support provided should be consistent across states and territories and metro and regional areas to ensure equity of access.

Activity outline:

- Delivery of essential orientation information and programs that can be adapted and implemented across Australia on issues such as
 - Workplace rights and entitlements
 - Australian systems: childcare
 - First Nations history and culture
- Warm referral pathways to culturally safe and accessible services including mainstream and government services.

PILLAR 2: Supporting multicultural community organisations

To meet our goal of a successful multicultural Australia where migrants are included equally, multicultural community organisations must be strong and secure.

One of the biggest challenges and risks to existing organisations is a lack of consistent funding, often forcing a focus on program delivery with short term contracts, at the expense of being able to properly represent the communities they work with. This is not a sustainable model and is a huge loss to migrants and Australia.

Currently, some state/territory governments provide support and funding for this work, but it is always insufficient for the need and are not consistent across the country.

Activity examples:

- Mapping of existing groups, identify capacity, capability gaps.
- Identify state programs and funding to avoid duplication.
- Gap filling to offer consistent suite of services.
- Capacity building delivered by the multicultural community sector to grassroots community organisations.
- Develop pathways for new migrants to be connected to multicultural peak bodies.
- Community of practice to share knowledge and learning across sector.

PILLAR 3: Supporting mainstream Australia to build a successful multicultural nation

Although Pillars 1 and 2 will strengthen the self-advocacy and outcomes for individual migrants and communities, this alone will not be enough for many migrants to overcome the barriers across Australian society that can keep them from thriving and reaching their full potential.

Capacity building is also needed in government services, business and industry bodies, individual employees, and institutions to better meet the needs of new migrants. The multicultural community sector is well positioned to take this role given its cultural capital in multicultural Australia, and extensive connections across communities, business, industry and government.

Activity examples:

- Diversity and inclusion training for workplaces and institutions.
- Capacity building across government to overcome unconscious bias build into policy. and programs and recognise and address institutional racism.
- Development of formal feedback loops to services on improving accessibility and cultural responsiveness.
- Programs to work with industries, business, and employees to identify, build and provide accessible pathways to employment and culturally appropriate information and support for employees.

ⁱ [How we support migrants | Immigration New Zealand](#)

ⁱⁱ [Settlement services | Immigration New Zealand](#)

Attachment D

Better informed, better prepared: Engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse communities before, during and after emergencies

Proposal

This proposal is for **\$5 million** to build capability within culturally and linguistically diverse communities to reduce disaster risk, build emergency-awareness and enhance community resilience. While individuals and communities have a role to play in reducing their disaster risk, building resilience and empowering their communities, strong and appropriate support is also needed from the Government before, during and after emergencies. This support must be delivered based on an understanding of the unique needs, strengths, perspectives and structures of influence within Australia's multicultural population, which means working directly with communities. This proposal also provides an opportunity to build the capability of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to engage meaningfully with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Community capability building will be delivered through a two-phased approach:

Phase 1 – A place-based approaches to build awareness of, and resilience to disasters through community-led, community-delivered initiatives; and

Phase 2 – An awareness campaign to increase knowledge and importance of building capability and resilience towards emergencies within multicultural communities.

A place-based approach (Phase 1) caters for the varied types of natural disasters and emergencies across regions in Australia and is key to building appropriate knowledge and resilience measures. The addition of a national multimedia awareness campaign (Phase 2) legitimises the importance of building community capability to eliminate the disproportionate vulnerability to disaster risks and shares the knowledge gained from Phase 1 across communities. FECCA would partner with the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), the most trusted media brand among multicultural audiences,ⁱ to ensure a widespread reach of the campaign.

Phase 3 will build knowledge within NEMA through co-designed principles on how best to engage with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the context of emergencies. The co-design will be driven by a collaboration between people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities with lived experience and expertise, drawn from the 1,500+ FECCA multicultural member organisations and our extensive network of practitioners, and academic experts in disaster response and resilience.

Purpose

The National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework has identified improving “public awareness of, and engagement on, disaster risks and impacts” as a key priority.ⁱⁱ The community capability building aspect of the proposed project will empower culturally and linguistically diverse communities to build awareness of, and resilience to, disasters, tailored to their specific context and needs. Learnings from this process will be used to deliver a multimedia awareness campaign in partnership with SBS, which will draw from the learnings and experiences of the community capability activities and to further extend the awareness and importance of disaster resilience among all multicultural communities.

The knowledge building component of the proposal will strengthen NEMA's capacity to understand the unique lived experience of people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This will support more effective engagement with communities leading to more appropriate emergency response and support measures to meet the needs of Australia's diverse population.

Rationale

Multicultural Australia is diverse and significant

Australia is a nation built on migration, with 51.5 per cent of its population born overseas or speaks a language other than English at home.ⁱⁱⁱ Furthermore, failing to consider the diversity among multicultural communities will lead to ineffective emergency response and recovery strategies targeting these communities. Emergency response strategies must embed the needs and diversities of culturally and linguistically diverse communities to avoid this considerable proportion of the population being left behind and vulnerable.

Multicultural communities are likely to experience the impacts of disasters more severely

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities are resilient, knowledgeable, and possess strong coping capacities. Despite this inherent resilience, multicultural communities face disproportionate impacts of disasters.^{iv} This can be attributed to several factors, including unfamiliarity with the social and physical environment of their new home, lack of social capital or engagement with community networks, and lack of trust in public institutions among new migrants and refugees.^v Furthermore, previous experiences of disaster and crisis have the potential to influence how risks are perceived, including how individuals might respond in emergencies.^{vi}

Diverse media consumption patterns within multicultural communities

The diversity of multicultural communities is reflected in the multitude of communication and media consumption patterns of different groups. For example, studies show that migrant women indicated higher preference for online posts and community newspapers, while refugee women favour English classes and ethnic radio.^{vii} Previous government efforts to communicate with communities have overlooked this myriad of differences, resulting in services and messages that do not connect with the intended audience. As a result, a sense of distrust in governments and institutions has developed. Communication should be made to reflect the nuances in media consumption preferences to ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse communities fully engaged with information regarding disaster risk and emergency resilience.

Opportunity for the Government to deliver more inclusive emergency services

Government policy frameworks and service delivery models often do not adequately understand or address the needs and perspectives of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia, nor do they harness their existing strengths and resources. This has led to disproportionately worse social, economic and health outcomes for many Australians.

COVID-19 demonstrated how culturally and linguistically diverse communities are largely absent from the overall emergency response approach which results in disproportionately negative outcomes. Inadequate or inaccessible communication and information broadcasts increased the risk of contracting the virus among multicultural communities. This is evident in the COVID-19 mortality rate of people born overseas, which was three times higher than those born in Australia,^{viii} which demonstrates the potential for disastrous results when emergency responses are not created in collaboration with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Co-design to deliver better outcomes for multicultural communities

Working alongside multicultural communities will ensure that emergency support efforts and pre-disaster preparations are tailored, culturally aware, and address the unique needs and diversities within and across communities. Additionally, this collaboration would result in comprehensive, readily available and accessible information to build resilience when dealing with emergencies and natural disasters within multicultural communities. The benefits of this approach were made evident during COVID-19, where targeted communication strategies developed and delivered by grassroots community organisations were proven to be more effective in both reaching the intended audience and resulting in action, compared to official national communication channels.

Implementation

Phase 1 of community capacity building: Delivery community-led initiatives

FECCA will work with NEMA to improve awareness of and engagement on, disaster risks and impacts in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This will be achieved by drawing on FECCA's well-established and trusted partnerships with organisations we have worked with previously to undertake community consultations and deliver community-led initiatives. Existing relationships provide established understanding of expectations and processes for effective delivery, reporting and communication.

FECCA's membership of over 1,500 community organisations, operational network of over 400 ethnic organisations, and deep relationships with diverse community organisations and community leaders helps us deliver community-led initiatives that are fit-for-purpose and appropriately scaled. Community-led initiatives respond to diversity at a micro scale through co-designing at the individual community level, ensuring that initiatives are tailored to support the specific needs of individual communities, while reaching the scale required to build community resilience nationally. The COVID-19 Small Grants Program funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care is an example of such a large-scale yet diverse program; through this program we have supported over 300 community organisations so far with grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000. The grant governance and implementation process, as well as the community organisations familiarity with the process, will ensure a fast, efficient rollout of a values-based, community-centric, transparent and accountable grants program that provides meaningful and measurable outcomes.

Phase 2 of community capacity building: National multimedia awareness campaign

Communities will work with SBS and the Department to co-design a national multimedia campaign that is culturally appropriate and meets the needs of various community groups in 60+ languages. The insight from the community-led initiatives to raise awareness and resilience of disasters (Phase 1) will go on to inform the campaign.

SBS has longstanding success in engaging and promoting participation within communities, a hurdle that the government has faced due to their previous failures in communicating important information during emergencies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, SBS launched the multilingual Coronavirus portal in March 2020, which has received 11 million unique Australian visits accessing trusted in language information throughout the pandemic. FECCA's extensive rapport with our members and community organisations in collaboration with SBS's trusted reputation will ensure maximum and effective reach of disaster risk and emergency resilience with the majority of the Australian population.

Phase 3: Building knowledge within NEMA through the co-design of best practice principles of engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities before, during and after emergencies

FECCA will work with our network of academics, community organisations and leaders to co-design principles that nurture effective, trusted engagement. This approach is key to effectively engage with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the context of emergencies. We have an existing highly productive partnership with the Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre (MMIC) at Monash University which actively works on issues around migrant and multicultural community resilience and cohesion.

ⁱ SBS Brand Pulse research April 2022

ⁱⁱ National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, Department of Home Affairs, 2018

ⁱⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics. "Snapshot of Australia." ABS, 2021.

^{iv} Chandonnet, A. Emergency Resilience in Communities, 2021

^v Hanson-Easey, S., Every, D., Hansen, A. and Bi, P. 'Risk communication for new and emerging communities: The contingent role of social capital'. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*. Volume 28; pp. 620-628. 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2018.01.012>.

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- ^{vii} Lee, S. K., Sulaiman-Hill, C. M., and Thompson, S. C. 2013. "Providing health information for culturally and linguistically diverse women: priorities and preferences of new migrants and refugees." *Health promotion journal of Australia*. 24(2), 98–103. 102
- ^{viii} Stephanie, D. 'Government data reveals being born overseas increases your risk of dying from COVID-19 in Australia', 17 February, 2022. [Government data reveals being born overseas increases your risk of dying from COVID-19 in Australia - ABC News](#)

Attachment E

Inclusive Climate Action: Engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse communities to deliver better outcomes for Australia's climate mitigation and adaptation strategies

Proposal

This proposal is for **\$5 million** to build capability within culturally and linguistically diverse communities to engage with Australia's broad climate mitigation strategies including electrification and place-based climate adaptation strategies such as adapting to extreme heat. Public support of, and engagement with both broad and local strategies are key to delivering a robust response to the challenges of climate change and to fully unlock the opportunities that climate response strategies can deliver.ⁱ Culturally and linguistically diverse communities have untapped strengths due to their experiences in different contexts, high adaptive capacity and strong social networks.ⁱⁱ Despite this, culturally and linguistically diverse communities are also more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and lag in the adoption of strategies like electrification.ⁱⁱⁱ This proposal bridges this gap and builds capability within Australia's large culturally and linguistically diverse communities with a focus on their unique needs, strengths, perspectives, and structures of influence.

Community capability building will be delivered through targeted co-design strategies that will support local, place-based approaches to build awareness of, and engagement with broad strategies like electrification and local, placed-based climate impacts like extreme heat. Even as Australia's response to climate change entails both mitigation and adaptation strategies, communities need to be engaged with it on both fronts. This initiatives-based approach of delivering engagement co-designed with culturally and linguistically diverse community organisations, trusted leaders and members with lived experience and expertise, drawn from the 1,500+ multicultural member organisations of FECCA, is an effective way to deliver to a large-scale program, tailored to local needs.

FECCA has used the initiatives approach to deliver a successful COVID-19 Small Grants Program, supporting over 300 community organisations so far with grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000.

Purpose

In its Annual Climate Statement in 2023, the Government has reaffirmed its commitment to "ensuring that all Australians benefit from the changes ahead." Ensuring community voices are heard in the policy and program development process, and that communities are supported in place-based initiatives is the pathway to ensure all Australians benefit from the changes in the future.

Currently, there are no specific programs to engage with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the context of climate change. This is a big gap. As shown by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the contexts and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities are unique and tailor-made engagements deliver the best possible outcomes. Culturally and linguistically diverse communities also have greater resilience, adaptive capacity and strong social networks. Activating this will go a long way in ensuring culturally and linguistically diverse communities can bridge the gap between their current vulnerabilities and future strengths.

Rationale

Multicultural Australia is diverse and significant

Australia is a nation built on migration, and our population is becoming increasingly diverse. In 2021, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that 51.5 per cent of the Australian population was born overseas or speaks a language other than English at home.^{iv} Despite the diversity within culturally and linguistically diverse communities, they are often treated as a homogenous cohort. This overlooks the myriad of

differences between communities, and results in services and messages that do not connect with the intended audience.

Multicultural communities are a vital part of Australia's workforce

Australia's switch to renewable energy brings with it massive opportunities for economic growth through employment generation. In order to achieve its commitments of 82 per cent renewable generation in the National Electricity Market, 43 per cent emissions reduction below 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050, the renewable energy industry will create up to 1.35 million jobs by 2050; however, there is a shortfall of skilled workers in the sector.^v Historically, Australia's energy workforce has been homogenous, with low workforce participation of First Nations, multicultural, women, gender diverse and people with disability.^{vi} As a vital part of the Australian work force, engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse communities is a pathway to address gaps and make the energy industry workforce more diverse.

Multicultural communities are likely to be left behind

International studies show multicultural communities are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.^{vii} In Australia, multicultural communities in urban and regional centres are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.^{viii} Multicultural communities also lag in household-level decarbonisation efforts including participation in energy retrofits.^{ix} In order to ensure that Australia's climate response leaves no one behind, the Department must build effective engagement with multicultural communities.

Strength-based, collaborative approaches deliver stronger results

Targeted community-led, strength-based, culturally informed emergency management strategies are crucial to utilising the existing strengths of multicultural communities which will build resilience towards the impacts of climate change. This will support the development of future pathways of communication and trust between communities.

As Australia progresses towards a sustainable future, it is of vital importance for the diversity of the Australian people, that their needs and aspirations are aligned with the policies and programs that affect them. This will ensure that investment into collaborating with communities delivers fit for purpose, accessible and equitable outcomes for the entire population.

Implementation

Building community capability through the delivery of community-led initiatives

FECCA will work with the Department to improve awareness of and engagement on, Australia's climate risks and responses in the form of mitigation and adaptation strategies in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Studies show that while culturally and linguistically diverse communities are resilient, knowledgeable and possess strong coping capacities, they experience disproportionate impacts of climate change and lag in the uptake of electrification initiatives.^x Awareness and resilience building will be delivered by helping communities co-design strategies and engaging with existing place-based adaptation initiatives and broader initiatives on energy.

FECCA will achieve this by drawing on our well-established and trusted partnerships with organisations we have worked with previously to undertake community consultations and deliver community-led initiatives. Existing relationships provide established understanding of expectations and processes for effective delivery, reporting and communication.

FECCA's membership of over 1,500 community organisations and our operational network of over 400 ethnic organisations are our biggest asset. Our deep relationships with diverse community organisations and community leaders across the country helps us deliver programs that are fit-for-purpose and appropriately scaled. While delivering large-scale programs, we retain a deep appreciation for the diversity and varied needs that exist within culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The grant program must respond to

this diversity at a micro scale. Co-design of community-led initiatives at the individual community level is the way to ensure the program is tailored to support the specific needs of individual communities, while reaching the scale required to build understanding and appreciation for Australia's climate risks and response nationally. The COVID-19 Small Grants Program is an example of such a large-scale, yet diverse program; through this program we have supported over 300 community organisations so far with grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000. Our pre-existing, robust process for grant governance and implementation and the experience community organisations have of this process, will ensure a fast, efficient rollout of a values-based, community-centric, transparent and accountable initiatives that provides meaningful and measurable outcomes.

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- ⁱ Buys, L., Miller, E. & van Megen, K. Conceptualising climate change in rural Australia: community perceptions, attitudes and (in)actions. *Reg Environ Change* **12**, 237–248 (2012). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10113-011-0253-6>
- ⁱⁱ Hansen, A, Bi, P, Saniotis, A, Nitschke, M, Benson, J, Tan, Y, Smyth, V, Wilson, L, Han, G-S 2013 *Extreme heat and climate change: Adaptation in culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities*, National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Gold Coast, pp. 101.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Majumdar, A., 2023. *Energy Justice in Australia's Housing Decarbonisation Transition: Learning from Community Housing Retrofits* (Doctoral dissertation, RMIT University).
- ^{iv} Australian Bureau of Statistics. "Snapshot of Australia." ABS, 2021.
- ^v Australian Industry Energy Transitions Initiative, 2023. *Skilling Australian Industry for the Energy Transition*.
- ^{vi} Jobs and Skills Australia, 2023. *Australia's Clean Energy Workforce*.
- ^{vii} Hansen, A., Bi, L., Saniotis, A. & Nitschke, M., 2013. *Vulnerability to extreme heat and climate change: is ethnicity a factor?*, *Global Health Action*, 6:1, DOI: [10.3402/gha.v6i0.21364](https://doi.org/10.3402/gha.v6i0.21364)
- ^{viii} Hansen, A et al. (n2)
- ^{ix} Majumdar, A. (n3)
- ^x Chandonnet, A. *Emergency Resilience in Communities*, 2021

Attachment F

Improving data standards and practices to deliver better outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Proposal

This proposal is for **\$8 million** to bridge the gaps that exist in Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD) data standards, data capture and linkage practices across different aspects of policy and service delivery settings. FECCA proposes a participatory process through a series of roundtables with key stakeholders including multicultural communities, the sector, Government, academics and data experts, where current CALD data standards and practices will be critically examined, and new ones will be co-designed. FECCA will deliver this participatory approach in partnership with Australian National University (ANU) Migration Hub. This process will result in cross-sector, nationally consistent multicultural data definitions that are situated within a robust data ecosystem covering data collection, storage, analysis, and dissemination and include concepts of data sovereignty to ensure people have ownership and control over the data that could identify them and a say in how it is used and presented. FECCA recommends this model of participatory development to ensure the delivery of people-centric, relevant, responsive data solutions that complement existing data infrastructures.

It is important to ensure that diversity data in Australia is consistently collected, comprehensive and truly reflects multicultural Australia. Currently, lack of consistency and multiple measures are limiting knowledge in critical areas such as health and prevention, despite culturally and linguistically diverse populations being often recognised as a priority populationⁱ. Developing consistent application across different contexts including research settings is key to ensuring the generalizability of findings and extending the utility of CALD data.

Purpose

There are widely acknowledged deficits in capturing data around cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in Australia. Data collection on CALD in Australia is guided by the Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity (the Standards), a framework developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (MCIMA) to define the variables necessary for the collection of consistent, comparable, and accurate information on CALD in Australia. The Standards have been criticised as vague, outdated, and insufficient for capturing the full breadth and depth of diversity in Australia.ⁱⁱ

The Standards must be revisited to guide the collection of CALD data that is more representative of diverse communities and, therefore, better serves the needs of multicultural cohorts and informs more effective program and service delivery and policy outcomes. Reforms to CALD data practices must be embedded in a national framework, to ensure that the reporting of CALD data is consistent across all levels of government and the sector. This will make it possible to track the progress and outcomes of programs and policies aimed at reducing ethnic socio-economic disparities. Additionally, consistent data is more generalizable and applicable across many contexts, which extends the utility and potential of captured data. Several Australian Government strategies identify people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as a priority population, however studies show that variables relating to cultural and linguistic diversity are different across different government surveys, leading to inconsistent data collection.ⁱⁱⁱ This inconsistency has had devastating consequences for communities – during COVID-19 inadequate support to culturally and linguistically diverse communities during the initial stages of the pandemic led to a higher death rate of people born overseas compared to people born in Australia. Consistency in the collection of CALD data, therefore, is a necessary measure for effective program, service and policy delivery, with significant impacts on the livelihoods of multicultural communities.

Re-examining the Standards through a collaborative and co-designed process which incorporates the lived experience of multicultural communities will inform the collection of data that is nuanced and relevant, and which represents the lived reality of multicultural communities, rather than a simplistic and incomplete representation. Greater visibility of the diverse identities and needs of multicultural cohorts of our society in our data ecosystem will inform better service delivery and program and policy design and create a more resilient and inclusive nation. **Updating CALD data standards and their applications is the pathway to identifying and eliminating potential discrimination and inequalities to build a fair and inclusive society for all Australians.**

Rationale

Better CALD data will lead to more effective investment through robust, evidence-based programs and policies

Australia's population is becoming increasingly diverse. In 2021, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that 51.5 per cent of the Australian population was born overseas or speaks a language other than English at home. However, culturally and linguistically diverse communities are often treated as a homogenous cohort, which results in services and messages that do not connect with the intended audience. The most commonly collected variables for identifying CALD in Australia are country of birth (apart from Main English-Speaking Countries) and preferred language. Reliance on these two variables has oversimplified our understanding of diversity and blurred the nuanced experiences of cultural and linguistically diverse communities, particularly of those with diverse backgrounds born in Australia and Anglo-Saxon countries, and those who prefer to speak English.^{iv} This issue requires re-examining the Standards and all datasets, including the Minimum Core Set of variables and the Standard Set, to ensure that diversity data collected in Australia truly represents lived experience of Australians and the diverse needs and identities of our contemporary society.

The benefits of applying best practice principles to CALD data

There are widely acknowledged deficits in capturing data around cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in Australia. Data principles including FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) are not codified into the collection and usage of CALD data. Adopting FAIR principles in the collection of CALD data will inform the collection of data that is of high quality and reusable across many contexts. Better data practices will reduce the burden on communities to repeatedly provide data and allow it to be reused and applied in relevant settings, thereby extending the utility of data that is collected and promoting a more efficient, rigorous system of data collection that can then inform better research and knowledge about multicultural Australia.

Incorporating data sovereignty principles in diversity data to empower multicultural communities

CALD data must be aligned with the individual and collective interests of multicultural communities. The purpose and aim of data collected must be clearly and transparently defined to build trust that such data is being used to promote group interests and not for wrongful purposes. **Communities must also be able to access the data that is collected about them, as well as have ownership and control over the data that could identify them and a say in how it is used and presented.** The quality of diversity data may be greatly enhanced by genuine community involvement in collection, analysis, and dissemination, while in turn further building trust in data. These principles, broadly referred to as data sovereignty,^v are crucial in ensuring that data collected on different social groups is empowering and relevant to their specific needs and experiences, informing better service delivery and decision-making for communities.

Standardised data collection will ensure that CALD data integrates with Australia's future data strategies

The number of different variables employed to measure cultural and linguistic diversity in each government survey varies. There are also inconsistencies about the type of information captured in terms of wording of the questions and the response options used among the surveys.^{vi} Without a standardised approach to collecting data on CALD, the full potential of the data cannot be leveraged across different applications. Inconsistent data limits the benefits offered by emerging data practices such as data integration projects,

which can provide rich insights and answer complex questions about the experiences of different population groups through the linkage of several data sources. **The experiences, characteristics, and outcomes of multicultural communities cannot be explored in data integration projects such as PLIDA (Person-Level Integrated Data Asset)^{vii} without first mandating the standardised collection of CALD data that is reusable and comparable across different sources.**

Implementation

FECCA will work in partnership with the **Migration Hub at the Australian National University** to conduct a series of roundtables. These roundtables will be structured at two different levels of data:

1) Broad principles governing CALD data.

The first level of roundtables will deal with the definition of national CALD data standards that are cross-sector, the development of best practice data principles and the standardization of data collection to ensure the inclusion of CALD data in integration projects like PLIDA.

2) The administration of CALD data in line with the needs of different sectors and government.

The second set of roundtables will be conducted to ensure that the data needs of specific sectors like Healthcare, Community Services etc. – within the government and in the community sector – are identified and captured in accordance with the data principles developed in the first set of roundtables. Strategies will be considered to tackle sector-specific gaps such as the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in clinical trials that leads to poor generalizability.^{viii}

Each of the roundtables will include people with lived experience and expertise, researchers, practitioners, government and the community sector. FECCA's network is our greatest asset. In addition to our membership of over 1,500 community organisations, and our operational network of over 400 ethnic organisations, we have initiated cross-sector collaborations and strategic partnerships with prestigious academic institutions like the ANU. Our strong connections in the sector - with peak bodies, subject matter experts, academics, practitioners and service delivery– will help us bring together a variety of perspectives and expertise, as well as academic rigour, into advancing CALD data.

ⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) Reporting on the health of culturally and linguistically diverse populations in Australia: An exploratory paper, catalogue number PHE 308, AIHW, Australian Government.

ⁱⁱ Australian Association of Gerontology (2023) AAG Position Paper: Capturing Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Australia.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} Ibid

^v Yoorrook Justice Commission (2022) 'Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Data Governance', Information Sheet (https://yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/041922_Yoorrook_DataSovereigntyGuidance.pdf)

^{vi} Ibid

^{vii} <https://www.abs.gov.au/about/data-services/data-integration/integrated-data/person-level-integrated-data-asset-plida>

^{viii} Hughson, J.A., Woodward-Kron, R., Parker, A., Hajek, J., Bresin, A., Knoch, U., Phan, T. and Story, D., 2016. A review of approaches to improve participation of culturally and linguistically diverse populations in clinical trials. *Trials*, 17, pp.1-10.