

Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia Submission regarding Measuring What Matters

31 January 2023

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 the Commonwealth 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 that 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 to build 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 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.

FECCA wishes to thank its members for their contribution towards this submission and their ongoing work with culturally and/or linguistically diverse people in Australia.



In development of this submission, we pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present and recognise that the land we live and work upon was never ceded. FECCA proudly supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice protected by the Constitution.

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.

Context to diversity

All work on multiculturalism must be implemented in a way that acknowledges and addresses the diversity within multicultural Australia. The discrimination and disadvantage a multicultural person or community faces is affected not only by their cultural and ethnic identities and language, but also by other intersecting social and political identity markers such as age, gender, sexual orientation, impairment, class, religion, and visa status. These identities do not exist independently; instead, each informs the other and can have overlapping and compounding effects. These effects can also be influenced by other factors – for example, living in a rural or remote area. It is not these diverse identities that generate vulnerability, but systemic exclusion that creates entrenched forms of disadvantage.

To measure what matters and improve the lives of all people in Australia, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and the diversity within this ‘category’ must be considered.

Data sources for cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity

Recommendation: Treasury should participate in the process, previously called for by FECCA and to which the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, committed the Government at the 2022 FECCA National Conference, to develop consistent, comparable and compatible measures of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity across all domains.

To measure what matters, with the aim of improving the lives of all people in Australia through policy and projects, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds must be appropriately counted. Currently, a national deficit exists in capturing data on cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity, significantly inhibiting the ability for informed and inclusive policy development.

Given the 2021 census showed that over 51% of the population was either born overseas or at least one parent born overseas¹ significant effort must be made to establish data sources and prioritise collection.

Across program and service design the most commonly collected criterion for identifying people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is ‘country of birth’ – as a sole indicator this is not helpful. For example, a person born in Singapore could be of Chinese, Malaysian or Indian descent. Some data sets include a language indicator. This does not adequately capture the diversity of experience and identity within the non-homogenous ‘category’ of culturally and/or linguistically diverse people.

The *FECCA 2022 Policy Platform* called for the establishment and resourcing of a National Working Group to develop consistent and accurate measures of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity to achieve adequate, appropriate, accessible and useful data collection to be used across all levels of government.

¹ [Snapshot of Australia](#), Australian Bureau of Statistics

FECCA's *If We Don't Count It ...It Doesn't Count! Towards Consistent National Data Collection and Reporting on Cultural, Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity*² paper demonstrates that administrative reporting, survey data and research methodology are impacting the generalisability of research findings and compromising the validity of many studies by not accurately reflecting the diversity of the Australian population.

Measure social inclusion

FECCA recommends adding a social inclusion category to the measuring what matters framework. To maintain Australia's successful multicultural legacy and build a strong future where everyone can belong, thrive, participate and contribute, a robust and coordinated approach to inclusion is required. Concepts of social inclusion and sense of belonging for all are essential when measuring what matters in Australia.

Racism, Discrimination and Feeling Safe

Recommendation: Introduce indicator for racism and discrimination.

Recommendation: Include cultural and linguistic diverse indicators on feeling safe.

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. Racism continues to be a problem in Australia and impacts on people's wellbeing, sense of belonging, and their connection to society. The 2021 *Mapping Social Cohesion* report³ from the Scanlon Foundation found an increase of 20% of respondents reporting racism as a problem in Australia – from 39% in 2020 to 60% in 2021. Further, 34% of people born in a non-English speaking country reported they had experienced racism, including 40% of all respondents born in Asia. It is time for a holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing racism at all levels of society, led by government.

The development of the National Anti-Racism Strategy is a welcome move by Government, and its implementation and monitoring must be resourced. For a multicultural and inclusive Australia, it is essential everyone in Australia can feel safe and proud to express their culture and language, free from discrimination. An indicator of racism and discrimination would help evaluate the progress of this and other policies and projects.

There is a gap in comprehensive data infrastructure in Australia compared to overseas jurisdictions like Canada, who have invested \$6.2 million into increasing the collection of reliable and comparable data for anti-racism work and have established, through legislation, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation to facilitate long-term race-based data collection and research.

² [If We Don't Count It ...It Doesn't Count! Towards Consistent National Data Collection and Reporting on Cultural, Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity](#)

³ [Scanlon Foundation: Mapping Social Cohesion Report 2021](#)

Representation in Government and Participation in Civic Life

Recommendation: Include measures of representation of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in politics.

The Australian community benefits from the rich and unique perspectives of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It is well understood that a diversity of voices at all levels of public decision-making, and representation has huge benefits for a society. Despite this, different forms of direct and institutional discrimination and racism intersect to create significant barriers to participation for many.

Programs and policies are being implemented to encourage more multicultural people to try and succeed at entering politics at all levels. The impact of these must be measured.

Migrant Integration Policy Index

Recommendation: Introduce migrant integration policy indicator.

Migration and multiculturalism are foundations of Australia's past, present, and future. The 2021 census showed that over 51% of the population was either born overseas or at least one parent born overseas.⁴ However, our current policy settings do not adequately reflect this diversity and therefore do not make the most of the rich economic and social potential this diversity offers.

Social aspects of migration such as family reunion, are as equally important as the economic aspects, and are crucial to creating a society where everyone can belong. While often considered separately, the social and economic benefits of migration must not be seen as unrelated or competing. For example, a strong family visa program is crucial to attracting the skilled migrants we need to strengthen our economy.

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX)⁵ measures integration policies across 56 countries. Measures include access to nationality, anti-discrimination, education, family reunion, health, labour market mobility, permanent residence and political participation for migrants. In 2019, Australia's MIPEX score had decreased significantly by 4 points (to 65) where globally an average growth of 2 points was measured⁶. MIPEX ranked Australia in the bottom 10 for permanent residence finding that since 2016, migrants were no longer entitled to permanent residence after fewer than 5 years of legal residency and had reduced access to social security and assistance.

This index is an important indicator for measuring the success of Australia's future migration policies and the building of a strong, resilient and inclusive nation and should be included when measuring what matters.

⁴ [Snapshot of Australia](#), Australian Bureau of Statistics

⁵ [Migrant Integration Policy Index 2020](#)

⁶ [Migrant Integration Policy Index](#)

Add culturally and linguistically diverse indicators to existing categories and indicators

Health Outcomes

Recommendation: Include cultural and linguistic diversity measures in all health measures, particularly premature mortality, negative affect balance and life expectancy indicators.

Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental human right and essential to the lives of people and their families. A successful multicultural Australia must ensure everyone in Australia has access to appropriate, quality, and safe health care regardless of their cultural, linguistic, ethnic, or religious background.

Health inequities and disproportionately poorer health and mental health outcomes are often experienced by multicultural communities.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can face barriers to accessing quality health care due to:

- information often not provided in plain English or languages other than English
- Australia's healthcare system being difficult to navigate
- limited awareness and use of interpreting services
- limited availability of culturally appropriate care
- limited health and medical research representative of Australia's diversity.

These barriers can lead to misdiagnosis or underdiagnosis, inaccurate prescribed medication levels, decisions being made without adequate, understandable information being provided and ultimately poorer health outcomes for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The impact of these barriers must be measured,

Employment

Recommendation: Include cultural and linguistic diversity measures in labour underutilisation rate.

Many people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, particularly recently arrived migrants from new and emerging communities, and refugees, face a number of barriers to obtaining employment. The 'Characteristics of Recent Migrants' (2019) survey found that one third (33%) of recent migrants who have had a job in Australia reported experiencing some difficulty finding their first job.

The most common difficulties were:

- A lack of Australian work experience or references (65%)
- A lack of local contacts or networks (29%).

FECCA's own research and consultations have revealed some other key challenges including:

- Difficulties obtaining recognition of skills, qualifications and experience gained overseas
- Experiences of discrimination, prejudice, or racism

- Limited familiarity with the Australian workforce, employment systems and culture, such as understanding employers' expectations around content and formatting of a CV
- Pre-migration experience, including experiences of torture and trauma
- Lack of opportunities to upskill and reskill
- Parenting and other caring responsibilities including prohibitive costs associated with paid care, lack of support mechanisms, and the lack of flexibility at workplaces and educational institutions.

Broader research supports FECCA's findings of barriers, including racism and discrimination in recruitment and promotion. For example, candidates with names linked to specific ethnicities need to apply for considerably more job vacancies before being shortlisted for an interview.⁷ FECCA's community consultations indicate that while culturally and linguistically diverse populations are increasing, employers are not sufficiently equipped with the skills needed to manage diverse workplaces. A case study of Iraqi, Afghan, Congolese and Sudanese communities in Shepparton, Victoria revealed a tendency for employment services and employers to make assumptions based on a person's cultural background rather than their individual circumstances.⁸ Some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds experiencing these barriers, often in combination, are compelled to settle for low-skilled, low-paid jobs, rather than jobs that meet their skills, experience and interests. To measure what matters and continue towards an inclusive society, the impact of this must be measured.

⁷ [Does ethnic discrimination vary across minority groups? Evidence from a field experiment](#)

⁸ [Community Perspectives on Settlement Issues Affecting New and Emerging Communities in Rural and Regional Australia, FECCA 2015](#)