

ECCV Position paper on freedom to wear cultural and religious dress

Respecting the rights and choices of women

1. ECCV supports and respects Victorian women's right and choices around their cultural and religious beliefs and dress.
2. ECCV is aware that women who are identifiably different are a vulnerable group, who are subject to more discrimination in different forms.
3. ECCV believes there are considerable misconceptions about cultural and religious beliefs and dress. ECCV recommends promotion of multi-faith activities which better inform and educate the community of Victoria's culturally and religiously diverse communities.
4. ECCV recommends that all levels of government have an important role to play in supporting the right of women to choose their cultural and religious beliefs and wear cultural and religious dress.
5. ECCV encourages governments support and empower Victorian women by facilitating proactive inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogues.
6. ECCV believes that the cultural and religious clothing, such as the burqa, is an appropriate manifestation of culturally diverse Victorian women's personal choice and religious devotion.

Promoting multiculturalism and social unity

7. ECCV recognizes that the freedom to decide how to function in society is essential to maintaining a sense of well-being and self-esteem; this includes the freedom to choose whether to wear any kind of religious clothing.
8. ECCV commends the Victorian government for their work in promoting multiculturalism and multi-faith activities, as increasing multicultural awareness benefits and fostering harmony for all members of society.
9. ECCV recommends all levels of government, ethnic and multi-faith communities and the wider community should work together to promote informative and open education programs, anti-discrimination, cross-cultural engagement and learning, and community awareness.
10. ECCV works closely with the Victorian Police Multi-Faith Council, which has been a successful example of cooperation and partnership, which has increased inter-faith dialogue.

11. ECCV recommends the development of culturally appropriate security responses, which respects the rights of the women. ECCV supports female police officers or authorized public officials verifying the identity of women wearing cultural and religious clothing for judicious legal and security reasons.