



Wednesday 15 May

**'Citizenship', 'Islamophobia', 'Social Cohesion', are poignant themes, which emerged at the recent community forum hosted by the ECCV in the lead up to the Federal election**

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Chairperson, Cr Kris Pavlidis, said her organisation's recently held Pre-Election Community Forum presented a good opportunity for voters at the grass-roots level to engage in Q&A with political representatives about their multicultural policies.

The Forum held at the Brunswick Town Hall on May 6, attracted strong community representation to hear from Peter Khalil, Labor Member for Wills, Adam Pulford, Greens' candidate for Wills, and Senator Scott Ryan, Liberal Senator for Victoria.

Cr Pavlidis said members of the public and community leaders were able to ask questions on issues of importance to them. Topics raised were wide-ranging including the likelihood of a Federal Multicultural Act, supporting responsible Aged Care and concerns about extreme racial and religious based behaviour.

The Member for Wills Peter Kahlil said he would advocate for a Federal Multicultural Act and Adam Pulford said he was supportive of a FMA, while Senator Ryan said he did not feel there was a need for one.

The three speakers acknowledged the importance of an effective Aged Care System, and Peter Khalil highlighted the million-dollar investment by Labor toward dental care and culturally appropriate services and programs.

Social Cohesion was identified as a key priority by Mr Pulford who said there was a need to fund an anti-Racism strategy in addressing perceptions about rising Islamaphobia within Australia.

Mr Kahlil indicated that Labor had a zero tolerance toward racism and had introduced anti-racism legislation. Senator Ryan talked about the danger of online trolling and stalking.

Cr Pavlidis, in closing the Forum, thanked the three panellists and audience members for their pertinent and thought provoking questions.

"The Forum was insightful and provided an overview of the Multicultural policies of the main political parties, and the audience questions have given us a lot to think about. It is obvious that we all have a lot more work to do," she said.

“ECCV is strongly urging all Victorians to assess and thoroughly scrutinise the multicultural policies and Action Strategies of the main political parties as part of the Federal election campaign.

“We are encouraging communities to evaluate the policies of political parties and to choose those representatives who they believe will take the best action to address their needs,” Cr Pavlidis said.

“We urge members of Victoria’s multicultural communities to speak to their local candidates about what is most important for our culturally diverse community.”

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