



Thursday, 24 September 2020

ECCV concerned over lack of consultation over 'values test' in new citizenship test

Any testing of new citizens needs to ensure acknowledgement of the rights of First Nations peoples and situate diversity front and centre of our shared values said ECCV Chairperson

ECCV Chairperson Eddie Micallef joins FECCA in welcoming the announcement by the Commonwealth Government that it will remove the English language test as a pre-requisite for future Australian citizens, however ECCV remains concerned about the future format of a compulsory "values test". Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs the Hon. Alan Tudge MP also announced that new questions on Australian values will be introduced in the citizenship test from November 2020.

"It is being reported that future questions to gauge sensitivity to Australian values of potential citizens will include – 'Should people in Australia make an effort to learn English?' and 'In Australia, do religious laws override Australian law?'," said Eddie.

"Australia today is a proud multicultural nation, and any testing of new citizens needs to ensure acknowledgement of the rights of First Nations peoples and situate diversity front and centre of our shared values."

Applicants will be required to answer all questions on values correctly to pass the test. In the current environment, where people on temporary visas, often our future citizens, are locked out of relevant social and financial supports, ECCV is seeking clarity from the Commonwealth Government about what the proposed changes will look like and how the questions were designed.

"Anxiety levels within migrant and refugee communities are already really high as a result of COVID-19. Any changes need to be explained thoroughly and culturally appropriate education programs developed to support people's successful pathway to citizenship," said Eddie.

"ECCV recommends that the Commonwealth Government consider translation support for any values test that new citizens are required to undertake. This is in line with current language services support provided to all Australians who need assistance to navigate the service systems."

"Any values test needs to be grounded in universal human rights, not abstract cultural questions."

- EOM -

The [Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Inc.](https://www.eccv.org.au) (ECCV) is the peak advocacy body for eight regional ethnic communities' councils and over 220 member organisations, including ethnic and multicultural organisations across Victoria. For over 45 years, we have been the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community.

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