



**DR RICHARD DI NATALE**

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Mary Patetsos  
Chairperson  
Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia

Dear Ms Patetsos,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia's (FECCA) election priorities.

**Will you develop a national legislative framework on multiculturalism? Please describe your plan for this framework or alternative for securing a socially cohesive society. A national legislative framework will secure a socially cohesive society through ensuring equal opportunity for all, promoting a sense of belonging and facilitating valued participation for all Australians.**

**The fundamental principle of multiculturalism should be embedded in government policy and the political system. FECCA calls for a 'National Multicultural and Race Discrimination Commission' to inform government, as well as the establishment of the 'Office for Cultural Diversity and Inclusion.'**

The Greens have a plan to celebrate our diversity and make Australia a more welcoming and inclusive nation for all of us

The Greens have introduced a Federal Multicultural Act to Parliament, which will create a framework for multiculturalism and establish clear guiding principles for Australian society to embrace cultural and religious diversity.

Our Federal Multicultural Act will promote full participation by Australia's diverse communities in the social, cultural, economic and political life of Australia. It includes the establishment of an independent Federal Multicultural Commission, which will provide independent advice to government and undertake evidence-based research on multicultural issues and ongoing community engagement.

The Act will also require government organisations and departments to report annually on action taken to promote multiculturalism, the use of interpreting and translating services, and the extent to which people from diverse backgrounds were represented on boards and committees. This is expected to cost \$138.2 million over four years.

**Will you commit to update and standardise the definition of CALD and ensure appropriate and adequate data collection? Please detail your plan for CALD data collection. A commitment to a comprehensive data collection framework would ensure stakeholders and researchers can better respond to the needs of people and communities.**



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**This includes addressing the issue that most commonly collected measures of CALD are country of birth and language spoken at home. As a consequence, those who may have been born in Australia or with English proficiency are currently excluded from the data set despite identifying as culturally or linguistically diverse. Comprehensive and correct data collection and analysis is essential to inform important decisions around policy change and resource allocation to ensure services are accessible, inclusive and respond to the needs of all Australians.**

The Greens are committed to ensuring that researchers, decision makers and service providers can better respond to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse people and we will work with stakeholders to develop more appropriate data collection methods.

**How will you develop social policy to address the specific needs of aged and ageing CALD Australians? Adopting a targeted program towards older CALD Australians is essential to ensure equity of access, experience and outcomes. The policy should prioritise, understand and develop strategies for challenges specific to older CALD people, such as inaccessibility to My Aged Care, absence of cultural competency training for aged care providers, issues of loneliness and isolation amongst older CALD Australians etc.**

The Greens are committed to ensuring all Australians from all backgrounds have access to safe, affordable, high quality aged care. The Greens recognise there are significant issues in the aged care sector, especially around home care packages. We will provide an additional 50,000 home care packages to go towards meeting the demand, which will also help us to meet the needs of older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We are aware that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds need culturally appropriate aged care services. The Greens believe aged care facilities should deliver culturally appropriate services tailored to the diverse needs of their residents, for example by hiring bilingual staff.

**How will you ensure the next 10-year plan to address violence against women will focus on intersectionality? A plan to address violence against women must include the intersectionality of factors that influence women's experience. The plan must be informed by and improve specific outcomes for diverse women including targeted prevention strategies for CALD women, increased access to services such as housing, culturally competent service providers and community legal education.**

The Greens will fully fund frontline crisis response services and primary prevention for domestic violence, at \$5.3 billion over ten years. This will allow for specialist services which are responsive to the needs of all women including CALD women, women with a disability, and LGBTIQ+ people. We will legislate to double domestic violence leave from five to ten days. Further, we will provide an additional \$200 million over four years to a Survivor Grant Fund, giving up to 50,000 survivors grants of up to \$4000 to minimise financial hardship when leaving an abusive scenario. The grants would be prioritised for people at highest risk of domestic violence. We will invest in targeted prevention strategies for CALD women, increased access to services such as housing, culturally competent service providers and community legal education.



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**Will you commit to addressing the citizenship backlog and ensure the availability of permanent family re-union? Please describe how these will be addressed. The availability of family reunion is important for successful settlement, allowing migrants to maintain family ties and connections. Restricting the number of people who can access permanent family reunion has already led to people finding other temporary means to come to Australia that provide limited opportunity to settle and integrate.**

**FECCA calls for a commitment to clearing the backlog of visa and citizenship applications and ensure new applications are processed within a reasonable timeframe. Unwarranted delays in the processing of citizenship applications cause significant hardship for families. These are families already living in Australia who wish to formalise their commitment to this country.**

**FECCA is concerned with reports showing that applications for citizenship by conferral have not been processed efficiently or in a timely manner. Processing times have increased, and long delays are evident between applications being lodged and decisions being taken, and there are significant periods of inactivity for both complex and non-complex applications.**

Australian citizenship conferrals have plunged to a 15-year low, as the backlog of applications increases to a record high. The Liberals have dragged their feet on citizenship timeframes. This is borne out of their fundamental disrespect for migrants, and obsession with kicking people out of our society. That culture has clearly infected the department. These delays are having real impacts on people's ability to live, work and participate in Australian society. The Australian Greens will continue to call for sufficient resources to process pending applications, to ensure the application process is quicker and easier for people wanting to make the ultimate commitment to our country – to become a citizen.

During Budget Estimates 2019-20, the Australian Greens were able to get unreleased data from the Department of Home Affairs on family reunion visas, which showed 50,000 parent visa applications waiting to be processed, with only 1,500 spaces available this year. Because of this, the wait times for processing is somewhere between 30 and 50 years. This means many parents will have died before their visas are processed. To skip the long waiting times, people can pay around \$50,000 per parent, which will reduce the processing time to just under four years: but this is not fair, and it is still too long. Migrants must also pass a balance of family test that doesn't recognise grandchildren, is stacked against people from big families, and punishes families who are already suffering because of members missing, but not declared dead.

These aren't family reunion visas - these are family separation visas.

The Australian Greens have a plan for permanent family reunions that will: clear the current backlog of parent visa applications in three years; cap wait times for parent visas at 12 months; review the unfair balance of family test; make costly and unfair contributory parent visas redundant and review the cost of family reunion visas; allow asylum seekers who arrive by boat to apply for family reunion visas; and abolish Temporary Protection Visas and reintroduce Permanent Protection Visas for refugees.



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**How will you ensure the needs, challenges and contributions of new and emerging communities are considered in all policy decisions including funding allocation? New and emerging communities require government support and assistance, including financial opportunities for projects, governance, infrastructure and advocacy. Empowering communities are ensured through provision of multicultural grants and training for grant applications. This commitment will ensure new and emerging communities are considered in policy to prevent side-lining.**

The Greens are committed to supporting new and emerging communities and ensuring that their voices are heard in our democracy. The more people that participate in our political system, the healthier we make our democracy. That's why we want to encourage greater public participation in our democracy, by using legislation to ensure that consumer groups and citizens are represented in government decision-making bodies, advisory bodies, and in oversight of community consultation processes. The Greens are committed to ensuring migrants and refugees have access to sufficient supports that meet their settlement needs. We recognise there are gaps in the current system, especially migrants and refugees who can't access programs like the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program. The Greens fully support the work that SETS does and will continue to liaise with the sector to ensure that the program has flexible requirements for applicants. Additionally, we will work with stakeholders within the sector to progress reform in this area.

**Will you deliver an anti-racism campaign? Will you consult and engage with community groups and faith leaders to improve government service delivery and coordinate against racism? Please detail this campaign. Commitment to sustaining multicultural, ethno-specific community organisations enables two-way communication between Government and leaders to ensure community safety and coordinate in an Anti-Racism strategy to combat the rising threat of extremism and white supremacy.**

The Greens will extend the current national anti-racism strategy, delivered by the Australian Human Rights Commission. This would include providing \$12 million each year to community organisations for programs creating awareness of racism and empowering communities to prevent it.

Programs would be delivered in community settings, including schools, workplaces, sporting organisations and media institutions, working with community groups and faith leaders. We will also work with states and territories to further resource and expand teacher training and education programs in all schools on civics, human rights and respect for diversity, to ensure that these ideals are further embedded in the National Curriculum.

The Greens will support greater community education and awareness raising on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and history. We support Reconciliation Australia's call for initiatives to eliminate racism from our health system as well as our education system, and ensure that experiences of individual and systemic racism faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are recognised, measured and addressed within COAG's Closing the Gap Strategy.



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But we believe that building a socially cohesive society requires a concerted effort from all levels of Government, and from every corner of our nation. Tackling inequality means ending discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity, sexuality, disability, religion, country of origin and ethnicity as well as addressing poverty and extreme wealth - just as our plan sets out to do. The Greens have a positive plan to end the outrageous \$11bn a year tax avoidance perpetrated by some of Australia's biggest companies, and we'll make sure that the wealthiest people and companies pay their fair share. We'll raise Newstart by \$75 a week and scrap the cashless welfare card. We'll build half a million new homes and work to end homelessness.

Along with many other policies, these kinds of ideas can transform our society for the better.

**Does your migration policy include location-based conditions for certain visas? Will you recognise the unique challenges of regional locations for new migrant and refugee people and assure access to the same level of services and opportunities regardless of location? Please describe your policy for migrant and refugee people living in regional locations. There is sufficient evidence that rural and regional CALD peoples continue to face multiple disadvantages including isolation and reduced access to services and community support. Rural and regional communities require specific assistance and assurance of service delivery, including access to English language programs and interpreted health services as well as funding for regional Ethnic/Multicultural Communities Councils to assist in settlement services.**

The Australian Greens' migration policy does not include location-based conditions for visas.

A particular concern of ours with the Turnbull-Morrison Government's regional settlement policy is its mandatory settlement period. Mandatory settlement periods don't take into account the many unexpected turns people face in their lives, like major local employers shut their doors, or new residents needing to move to a city for medical reasons. Migrants should be empowered to settle in regional areas, but not locked into particular regions for arbitrary time frames.

Regional settlement programs would need to improve the lives of migrants, and not just be an excuse to shove them out of sight.

**Will you commit to reducing barriers to employment for migrants and work towards the eradication of worker exploitation of migrants and CALD peoples? Please detail this commitment. A whole-of-government approach is necessary to address barriers to entry and systemic workforce exploitation linked to racism, discrimination, visa status and lack of education and training. There is also a need for increased provision of culturally and linguistically-appropriate information regarding work rights, educating migrant employees of available services to help workers exercise their rights. A national multicultural employment strategy would also include advancing the opportunities for CALD peoples, especially women, in all sectors and establish vocational training programs for those unemployed or in insecure work.**



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Yes, Australia needs new laws to ensure greater employment in decent work for people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from non-English speaking, refugee and migrant backgrounds as well as other disadvantaged groups. Additionally, the Greens will work to ensure that migration laws and free trade deals do not undercut Australia's local labour laws. Loopholes in free trade agreements allow employers to circumvent local labour laws, which leads to the systemic exploitation of temporary visa workers and local workers being denied job opportunities and training. Australia must stop signing up to these unfair trade deals. Moreover, the system regulating the use of guest workers should be negotiated between unions, employer organisations and the federal government.

Established Australian rates of pay should be guaranteed. Labour laws must be properly enforced to ensure that local legal standards are being applied everywhere, both for local workers and for guest workers. Finally, temporary visa holders should not be automatically locked out of the permanent migration program.

**Will you commit to an effective English language learning program? Please detail this commitment. FECCA advocates for English language learning that is accessible, appropriate and affordable, and avoids punitive language testing. FECCA advocates for a creative and tailored approach depending on the needs of the group to ensure higher participation and outcomes.**

The Greens strongly support greater resourcing of culturally inclusive state and local government education programs and services. The Greens are proud to be strong advocates for equal access to education, services, and social support in settlement for refugee and migrant women and funding for culturally inclusive education. The Greens' plan to make university and TAFE completely fee-free will mean greater access for women from CALD, migrant and refugee backgrounds. In addition to this, the Greens will invest \$50m to provide better English language support, through the following initiatives:

1. Stop the undermining of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and begin an urgent review to reverse the outsourcing of services.
2. Ensure the development and implementation of a nationally agreed English language proficiency framework for assessing and reporting on the needs and progress of students learning English as an Additional (EAL) language in schools.
3. Support the development of effective post-school education and training pathways for migrant and refugee youth who have difficulty accessing the education and training system due to a lack of English and prior education.
4. Establish a dedicated unit in the Department of Education and Training to oversee and coordinate language in education and training.



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The Greens will also make University and TAFE fee-free to give everybody a fair go and break the cycle of disadvantage and guarantee access. We will raise the HELP payment threshold and tie the repayment threshold to the median wage so that people are not saddled with tens of thousands of dollars in student debt that takes decades to repay. Our plan will make sure students with an existing debt are not repaying their study costs until they are able to. The Greens will raise Youth Allowance by \$75 a week and change the earnings threshold so students can earn an extra \$100 a week before their payment is reduced.

We will also extend Austudy payments to all fulltime postgraduate students at a cost of \$5.72bn over ten years to ensure that young researchers, teachers and students seeking advanced education have the income support they need to flourish. The Greens will boost university funding by 10% per student to improve learning and teaching conditions. We will ensure universities are held accountable by working with staff and their unions to link funding under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme to reductions in the rate of insecure work in universities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to FECCA's election priorities. I look forward to working with you to progress these matters in the next parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Senator Richard Di Natale  
**Leader of the Australian Greens & Senator for Victoria**

