

8 March 2023

The Hon Andrew Giles MP
Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Submission from Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ) Recommending More Inclusive Consultations on the Draft Terms of Reference for a Review of Australia's Multicultural Framework

ECCQ welcomes the Albanese Government's plan to review Australia's Multicultural Framework, which will examine policy settings to ensure they advance a multicultural Australia, support our cohesive and inclusive multicultural society, and harness the talents of all Australians.

We also commend the government's plan to give a voice to members of the society through consultations on the draft terms of reference for this review. We take this opportunity to ask the government to carry out rigorous and more inclusive consultations so that even the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach community members, including migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, can have a say on matters of significant impact on their lives.

ECCQ has historically contributed to the development of Queensland as a harmonious and welcoming state. We promote a socially cohesive society and enhance the belief that everyone, irrespective of their background, should be able to participate meaningfully in all key aspects of Australian society. We further believe that diversity and social inclusion build stronger communities through collaborations, trust and sharing of cultures, values, ideas, and experiences.

The needs of marginalised communities such as migrants and refugees are different in nature and therefore, they required tailored and holistic interventions (Finlay, 2020). For example, despite the sophisticated support offered by government institutions and settlement services organizations, migrants and refugees remain amongst the most marginalised population groups in Australia. The employment rate within this cohort is 33.3% for men and only 7.5% for women. These rates are strikingly lower than those of the Australian-born population where respectively 81.1% and 69.6% of men and women are employed (Perales et al., 2022).

Notwithstanding Australia's controversial migration history (Cadwallader, 2015: 01), the country remains one of the major migrants' destinations. According to Refugee Council of Australia (2015), for example, at least 13,750 refugees are resettled to different cities in Australia annually through the offshore humanitarian program. Thousands of skilled migrants also make Queensland home, bringing a variety of skills, qualification and professional experiences that could contribute to the state economy and the overall performance of the society politically and socially (Deloitte, 2018).

While integration into the community, understanding and embracing the Australian way of life is a core indicator of migrants' settlement's success, it is not an easy task for the most vulnerable cohorts in Australia such as refugees and asylum seekers to achieve (Ngendakurio, 2017). Society has heard stories or at least seen the face of refugees and other vulnerable migrants in the community. Their faces can hardly hide their



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hardships, vulnerabilities, hopelessness, and frustrations (The National Council of Priests in Australia, 2014). The result of host paranoia has shaped Australia's debates about multiculturalism and the society for a very long time, constructing non-whites as the “unintegrated other”, where the mainstream society questions the necessity, possibility, and desirability of the integration of the newly arrived non-whites (Hage, 2002).

As Ngendakurio (2017) would put it, enhancing social inclusion of refugees and other vulnerable migrants has been challenging due to the following factors:

- The lack of awareness about pre-arrival conditions and how these shape the way migrants sell themselves in the labour market.
- The lack of social network and social capital.
- Low levels of literacy
- Failure by employers and systems to recognise overseas training and qualifications.
- Compromised (or lost) childhood and education because of heavy-laden history and experiences, including torture and trauma.
- High prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence
- Lack of confidence
- Racism
- Adverse government policies based on neo-liberal approaches.

The 2018 Deloitte Report also points to issues of access to the labour market, with 49% in every 100 skilled migrants failing to use skills or experiences gained before moving to Australia. Ironically, approximately 6,240 underutilised migrants and refugees had skills that aligned with the skills shortages as of November 2018 (Deloitte, 2018).

The Benefits of Inclusive and Rigorous Consultations

Inclusive and rigorous consultations with representatives of the vulnerable community groups will enable community leaders to communicate concerns, solutions, and priorities to the government, from their perspectives, as one of the community leaders put it during ECCQ's recent roundtable discussions:

[...] So, consider the voices of community leaders, consultation. And that's really not even it. That consultation (needs to be) meaningful consultation. But also incorporate those (responses). (So, I can) feel this is my contribution, I think that's really what the government needs to do (Speaker 5).

The point made by speaker 5 is also supported by speaker 6 who claimed that whatever the system does without their input is, in fact, against them, as they put it:

I'm going to say this, that the system, whoever is leading the system, listen to me and listen to my needs. And apply this principal that whatever you do without me, you do against me [...] And again, it's very important. I'll come back to this because this what have seen. We have organizations and service providers who have plans. We don't know where they get those plans from. I'll come back to that consultation (Speaker 6).

Speaker 4 also agrees, and they go further to suggests that all program deliveries be co-designed. They claim:

Consultation and co-design. Because when they co-designing, what really ticks me off is I look at this grant and you're thinking, okay, yes, it's addressing one part of youth, but it doesn't address the other part. Stop fooling our communities (Speaker 4).

These statements by the community leaders clearly demonstrate the need for them to be consulted on important matters.

In Queensland, ECCQ has an existing network of community leaders (see table below), and we welcome the opportunity to work with the Albanese Government to connect with them as a part of this consultation process.

Adults

Names	Ethnicity/origin	Gender/Migration status
Xxxxx YYYYYY	India	Female / migrant
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Pasifika	Female / migrant / labour scheme
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Māori	Male / migrant
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Māori	Male / migrant
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Philippines	Female / migrant
Xxxxx YYYYYY	South Sudan	Male / refugee
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Eastern Europe	Male / migrant
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Congo (DRC)	Female / refugee
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Vietnam	Female / migrant
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Peru	Female / migrant
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Afghanistan	Female / refugee
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Portugal	Female / migrant
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Syria	Female / refugee
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Italy	Female / migrant
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Myanmar	Male / migrant

Xxxxx YYYYYY: First and last name hidden for privacy.

Youth

Names	Country of origin	Gender/Migration status
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Pakistan	Male / international student
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Myanmar	Female / refugee
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Somali	Female / refugee
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Afghan	Female / migrant, with refugee experience
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Syria	Female / refugee
Xxxxx YYYYYY	India	Male / international student
Xxxxx YYYYYY	South Sudan	Female / refugee
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Pasifika	Female / migrant
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Rwanda	Male / refugee

Xxxxx YYYYYY: First and last name hidden for privacy.

Regional

Names	Country of origin	Gender/Migration status	Region
Xxxxx YYYYYY	South Africa	Male / refugee	God Coast
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Japan	Male / migrant	Gold Coast
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Hmong	Male/ refugee	Cairns
Xxxxx YYYYYY	South Sea Islander	Male / migrant	Rockhampton
Xxxxx YYYYYY	African Association	Female / refugee	Cairns
Xxxxx YYYYYY	South Sudan	Female / refugee	Toowoomba
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Yazidi/Kurdistan	Female / refugee	Toowoomba
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Sudan	Male / refugee	Toowoomba
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Pasifika / Māori	Female / migrant	Gold Coast

Xxxxx YYYYYY	Thailand	Male / migrant	Cairns
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Arakanese (Myanmar)	Male / refugee	Cairns
Xxxxx YYYYYY	Ethiopian	Female / refugee	Gold Coast

Xxxxx YYYYYY: First and last name hidden for privacy.

Conclusion

Whether it's working alongside culturally diverse communities through our support and education programs, or seeking equity around access to services, ECCQ is renowned for supporting Queensland's growth into an inclusive and harmonious community for everyone to participate and thrive socially and economically. The Albanese Government's plan to review Australia's Multicultural Framework to examine policy settings to ensure these advance a multicultural Australia, support our cohesive and inclusive multicultural society, and harness the talents of all Australians aligns well with ECCQ values and we remain committed to help where we can.

Yours sincerely



Lisa Ward
Chief Executive Officer

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