



# Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia Inc.

## ECCWA Response to Senate Select Committee on Temporary Migration:

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The Ethnic Communities Council of WA Inc welcomes the Senate Select Committee's enquiry on the impact of Temporary Migration in Australia. According to the ABS 2016 census, 33 per cent of Australians are from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) background; another 16% have one or both parents born in another country (2016 stats also indicate that 53.8% of people in WA have one or both parents born overseas.); speak more than 300 languages (not including many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's languages) and 20 per cent of people with disability are from CaLD backgrounds. CaLD people are not a homogenous group and are not all the same. There is diversity within diversity. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/Media%20Release3>

As Australia is a very large country and most of the population is settled in capital cities and other big cities, there is always a need for temporary and permanent skilled and unskilled migrants in the rural, regional and remote areas to support Australia's service industries including disability, aged care, healthcare, education and information technology, hospitality, as well as construction, mining and farming industries in those areas.

### **About the Ethnic Communities Council of WA Inc.**

ECCWA is Western Australia's peak Non-profit / non-government community based ethnic umbrella organisation. ECCWA takes an active interest in all aspects of multiculturalism, culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) affairs and acts on behalf of all ethnic communities in Western Australia (WA). ECCWA has been providing advocacy supports to multicultural communities for 45 years and is a member of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA).

Through the Ethnic Advocacy and Support Team (EAST), ECCWA provides specialised advocacy support for individuals who are unable to access government funded services.

ECCWA's objectives are to:

- Ensure that its policy positions contribute to government's policy making;
- Promote and safeguard the interests of CaLD communities in WA;
- Disseminate WA government information to the Ethnic Communities. For more information about ECCWA, please refer to our Website at: [www.eccwa.org.au](http://www.eccwa.org.au)



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## **ECCWA's response to the Terms of reference:**

On 5 December 2019, the Senate resolved to establish a Select Committee on Temporary Migration, to inquire into and report on the impact temporary migration has on the Australian economy, wages and jobs, social cohesion and workplace rights and conditions, with particular reference to:

### **(A) Government policy settings including their impact on the employment prospects and social cohesions of Australians;**

Australia since the arrival of the white settlers has always benefited from properly managed migration programs to advance its economic, political, social and cultural development. Australia's Multicultural Policy states that government services and programs must be responsive to the needs of our culturally diverse communities; It commits to an access and equity framework and puts the onus on the government to provide equitable services to Australians from all backgrounds,

However, during the last three decades' subsequent governments have been implementing policies like:

- Cutting interpreter and translation funding from most non-government community based agencies that support migrants and refugees;
- Significantly reducing annual migration intake: )
- Introducing written citizenship tests which have excluded so many people who are not even literate in their own language but are hardworking, tax paying responsible people with no recognition for their contribution to the Australian economy, social cohesion and workplace rights and conditions.
- Demonising asylum seekers as burdens on the welfare system and locking them up indefinitely in off-shore detention centres. This policy has divided the Australian public.
- Ignoring the impact of Temporary protection visas on women escaping domestic violence not being allowed to work and support themselves and having to wait lengthy periods for decisions on their visa status by the Department of Home Affairs means they become dependent on the Not-for-profit community network for housing and financial support. This leads to perceptions in the Community that these women may not be legitimately needing protection but making use of a system and getting welfare support.
- Not acknowledging the impact of Australian born children to Australian citizens and Temporary visa holders which has enormous implications for the Not-for profit sector as often the community has to support the mother and child as the mother is not allowed to work and the Australian born father wishes no responsibility for the child and does not wish to pay child support. These regulations also put a drain on the Family Court System, the Welfare (Centrelink) system, Housing, Health etc. The damage to social cohesion and mainstream society's attitudes is also substantial as a result of these policies.

Unfortunately, having people from diverse ethnic, religious, race backgrounds in a melting pot without programs to support their healthy integration and adaptation into mainstream Australia is more likely to cause more problems and create further disadvantages for a minority group who are already disadvantaged. Further, Australian migrants may not feel welcomed, included in the wider community or develop a sense of belonging to Australia. It



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will also cause them to become very isolated and subject to be abused through poor workplace conditions.

The Australian Multicultural Policy is not monitored, evaluated and audited. The government departments are not appropriately resourced to support CaLD people more equitably. Australia needs a labour force to sustain production and improve the services in the regional, rural and remote areas and therefore needs to improve the infrastructure and policies to enable the integration of migrants in the Australian society.

## **(B) The impact of temporary skilled and unskilled migration on Australia's labour market;**

As Australia has an ageing population and birth rates are low, through people on Working Holiday and 457 Visas (since 1996), Australia has been benefiting significantly from temporary migration of skilled and unskilled labour force in the rural and remote areas in mining, farming, construction, and services industries. Most agricultural towns in Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria can only be sustainable on properly managed temporary and permanent migration programs. Most young people in these towns move to bigger cities for better education and employment opportunities and the loss of their labour could only be mitigated by increased migration to the regions. [www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au) › [\\_\\_data](#) › [assets](#) › [pdf\\_file](#) › [sub062-migrant-intake](#)

## **(C) Policy responses to challenges posed by the temporary migration;**

ECCWA is concerned that while employers may use their resources to train migrants on temporary visas, these temporary migrants may or may not be granted permanent visas or be allowed to bring their family members to Australia and they may have to leave the country after gaining training and experience. This is a waste of limited training resources and the workforce also loses the experience and expertise of the employee. We then have to spend more time and resources to train a new workforce which may or may not be sustainable for the long term. It would also be difficult to maintain and sustain a workforce if temporary migrants cannot benefit from Australia's Medicare, healthcare, education, and other services equally as everyone else. Australia's temporary and permanent skilled and unskilled migration program must take into consideration its international obligations and covenants and Family Stream Migration requirements.

## **(D) Whether permanent migration offers better long term benefits for Australia's economy, Australian workers and social cohesions;**

ECCWA believes that permanent migration may offer long term benefits to Australia's economy and social cohesion, if the government meaningfully resources its multicultural policy and programs and builds the infrastructure to equitably meet the employment, housing, education, healthcare, disability, aged care and other needs of migrants.



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**(E) The impact of wage theft, breeches of workplace rights and conditions, modern slavery and human trafficking on temporary migrants; and**

Australia has harsh penalties for people who are involved in human trafficking, modern slavery, wage theft, etc but unless there is a complaint, there is no regular check on these people to monitor their employees work and living conditions. ECCWA believes that many international students and other migrants on temporary visas may be forced to work under inhumane conditions and get paid less than the minimum wage or be required to work against their will. There needs to be proper regular checks on the workplaces / industries where migrants on temporary visas work to prevent breaches of work rights, wage theft, slavery / human trafficking.

**(F) Any related matters. A fundamental flaw in the entire system of temporary migration that exists at the present time is that most taxpayer funded services are restricted to being accessible only to permanent residents or citizens. So people here as students, 457 visa holders and some special category New Zealand visas are not able to access services such as NDIS, Disability services and similar issues. The temporary visa holder is more often than not a tax payer. Often this temporary resident is employed in more than one job. And is therefore subject to tax at a very high level. Yet they are unable to access taxpayer funded services of any kind,**

**Vivienne Pillay  
Executive Officer**