



Liberal Party Condemned for its Boycott of Election Forum

The Liberal Party of Australia did not participate in the Pre-Election Forum organised by the Ethnic Communities Council of WA (ECCWA) yesterday. ECCWA President Ramdas Sankaran said, "it was absolutely disgraceful behaviour on the part of the Liberal Party not to have acknowledged our invitations let alone accept it given the number of times, we extended it and despite the great respect that ECCWA and I have for the Hon Ken Wyatt, the Hon Senator Dean Smith and the Hon Julie Bishop, for their support and assistance."

"The Liberal Party was described as a serial offender for it had not participated in the Forums that the Council organised before the last state and Federal elections" and in so doing denied the opportunity for CaLD west Australians to obtain information/ascertain clarification in relation to their policies for them to exercise their franchise in an informed manner."

Dr Anne Aly the Member for Cowan who represented the ALP said "Multiculturalism is not about song and dance and was critical about the lack of cultural and linguistic diversity in our parliaments. She indicated that concrete actions including a Multiculturalism Act, will be taken to effectively address the disadvantages and barriers that confront a culturally and linguistically diverse population. She lamented about the fact that the learning of community languages had not been accorded the priority that it deserves, for decades and indicated that addressing this would be a priority for the ALP. She also said that "Refugee policy needs to be tempered in the context of international concern about criminal syndicates seeking to exploit refugee/asylum seeker populations for criminal purpose."

Australian Green's Senator the Hon Jordon Steele-John emphasised the importance of the acceptance of the unique role of our indigenous population reflected by their aspirations and prior ownership being the basis of the Australian identity. He was critical of both parties with regard to off shore processing and mandatory detention of asylum seekers. He noted that the NDIS had been designed by people with disabilities for pwd's however indicated his disappointment that the rollout had not been undertaken appropriately and there were many issues that needed to be attended to urgently.

Both of them responded to several questions from the audience. Details of the issues raised at the Forum can be obtained via ECCWA website at www.eccwa.org.au

ECCWA was critical of the refugee/asylum seeker policies of both the ALP and the Coalition. Mr Sankaran, "highlighted the fact that Australia has a very proud history of resettling hundreds of thousands of displace people since the Second World War and during the 70s and 80s from Vietnam under the Orderly Departure Program."

"ECCWA called for "an immediate end to off shore processing of Asylum seekers as well as their indefinite detention and argued that **at least 15%** of our annual immigration intake be reserved for the refugee and special humanitarian programs."

We trust that Australians will back the national, "I Choose Humane" campaign to ensure the incoming government will treat them humanely, with compassion and in accordance with the internal conventions that Australia has ratified", said Mr. Sankaran.

"Hopefully that will ensure that the incoming government will have the courage to dismantle off shore detention and explore regional solutions to keep our borders safe when it is returned to government" he added.

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