



CMCF BACKS CONSULTATION ON CITIZENSHIP TEST

May 1, 2008

The CMCF supports the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia (FECCA) in its efforts to participate in a comprehensive review of the Australian Citizenship Test.

CMCF Chair Sam Wong said it had long been CMCF's view that the current test is fundamentally flawed.

"It was introduced without any consultation with either the multicultural community or the broader Australian public," he said.

"It is discriminatory, especially in the case of refugees who often come to this country in dire circumstances with little resources available to prepare for an on-line exam. The test does not allow for low literacy or disabilities and a number of the questions are so obscure that the average Australian cannot answer them."

"CMCF is not surprised to learn, as FECCA points out, that there has been a significant drop in the number of people applying for citizenship since the test was brought in."

In providing input into the inquiry into the test in July 2007, CMCF highlighted that the test would have a negative impact on those applying to become citizens. At that time, CMCF stated that the test would not contribute to goals of "instilling Australian values" or "helping migrants to integrate and maximise the opportunities available to them".

CMCF stated that the test would, in fact, work against the long-standing position of successive governments, of both political parties, that people who live here permanently should be encouraged to become full members of the Australian family."

Mr Wong said that a review is needed as there are more practical ways of using the funds that are currently spent on administering and monitoring the test. The emphasis should be on education, ongoing community integration and employment skills programs. "Ensuring successful settlement and continuing support to guarantee good citizenship is more important than focusing on a one-off, multiple-choice test," he said

"We are delighted that this time there is to be a consultative process and the establishment of an independent committee," he said. "CMCF will be making a submission and we encourage all other interested groups and individuals to do the same."

For further information contact Sam Wong on 0433 947 888