
CMCF welcomes citizenship test review

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The Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) welcomes the decision by the Federal Government to review Australia's new citizenship test.

CMCF chair Sam Wong said the test had been introduced by the previous Government without taking into account the views of the multicultural community.

"As a result the test has proved to be discriminatory, especially in the case of refugees who have come to this country often in dire circumstances and with few recourses available to prepare for it," he said.

"We believe substantial changes should be made – in particular we do not feel the grant of Australian citizenship should be reduced to the level of an examination. As it stands it is a measure of how much a person knows, rather than their value or commitment to the Australian community.

"The previous Government said it believed that migrants should have adequate knowledge of Australian culture and values. Who defines culture and values? These are things that are constantly evolving. No-one believes that the Australian culture of say the 1930s or 1950s is anything like that which prevails today."

Mr Wong said he believed programs for migrants should instead put the emphasis on education, especially in the language area.

"The teaching of English is an important first step towards the ability to absorb and understand the Australian lifestyle, yet resources in this area are woefully inadequate," he said.

"It is no small tribute to the many migrants who came here in the past with no English language skills, often illiterate in their own language, that they overcame these obstacles to become exemplary Australian citizens.

"CMCF believes the citizenship test was introduced more for its electoral popularity than for the possibility it will produce more knowledgeable and patriotic Australian citizens. With the election over we hope that not only the test itself, but the thinking behind it, will be subject to rigorous review."

For further information contact Sam Wong on 0433 947 888.