

SUBMISSION NO. 40

FECCA Submission to the Inquiry into Cyber-Safety for Senior Australians



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April 2012

Preliminary

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Federal Parliament's Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety's Inquiry into Cyber-Safety for Senior Australians.

FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. FECCA provides advocacy, develops policy and promotes issues on behalf of its constituency to government and the broader community. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism so as to build a productive and culturally rich Australian society. FECCA's policies are designed around the concepts of empowerment and inclusion, and are formulated with the common good of all Australians in mind.

Demography

A core component of FECCA's constituency consists of Senior Australians from CALD backgrounds. As FECCA highlighted in our July 2010 submission to the [Productivity Commission Inquiry - Caring for Older Australians - A CALD Perspective](#), this group is growing significantly. Indeed, by 2021 it is expected that 30% of Older Australians (65 and over) will

be from a CALD background, up from 18% in 1996. According to the 2006 census, 21% of the 65+ age group come from a non-English speaking background (NESB).

As discussed in depth in the FECCA submission referred to above and in our 2011 submission [Realising the Economic Potential of Senior Australians – A CALD Perspective](#), Senior CALD Australians can face significant barriers, including language and financial barriers, to accessing appropriate support, and participating equally in Australian society, as they age. We also highlighted that Senior CALD Australians can be significantly impacted by the ‘digital divide’, as they struggle to engage in an increasingly digitised world.

Accessibility

While FECCA is pleased to note the Inquiry terms of reference, as these terms relate to the safe engagement by Senior Australians with new technology, we contend that, in the first instance, it is imperative to consider the inherent accessibility of new technologies to Senior CALD Australians.

As FECCA Chair, Mr Pino Migliorino, conveyed in his address to the ‘*My Language*’ conference in August 2010 (*‘FECCA and CALD communities in the Digital Age’*), Senior CALD Australians are a group that require specific and detailed consideration when it comes to discussions about whether or not increasingly moving information sources, and services, online can prove to be exclusionary.

In his address Mr Migliorino outlined that three factors can simultaneously impact on older immigrant’s access to information. These are presented below.

1) **Limited Language Ability** - Older immigrants may struggle to acquire English language, particularly if they immigrate later in life, and as they get older some CALD immigrants can also become increasingly dependent on their first language. Language barriers can certainly act to prevent engagement with information provided online, and can reduce confidence in engaging with new technology.

2) **Limited Digital Literacy** - Many older CALD immigrants are unlikely to have had significant training in the use of new technologies.

3) **Limited Access to Digital Technology** – financial constraints may mean that older CALD immigrants have limited opportunity to engage with new and emerging technologies.

To this effect FECCA contends that there must be clear strategies in place to engage in digital literacy training for, and provide digital access opportunities to, Senior Australians from CALD backgrounds. These strategies could focus on additional funding to libraries and other services that can provide free online access, and could look to creating opportunities for in language support and training around engaging with new technologies.

At the same time, FECCA contends that all service providers must recognise that online engagement can exclude Senior Australians, particularly those from CALD backgrounds, and so there may need to be increased focus on human interaction in service delivery. We also attest that service providers must ensure they adequately engage with interpreters as needed to ensure equal access.

As FECCA noted in our [2010/2011 Access and Equity Consultation Report](#), derived from significant community consultations around Australia:

More emphasis on culturally appropriate and linguistically sensitive information provision for CALD communities was consistently requested. For example, with health information increasingly going online or becoming digitalised, participants noted that many CALD communities are not catered for. Many CALD communities, particularly newly arrived humanitarian entrants and older migrants groups, have low levels of digital literacy and limited access to computers and the internet. Furthermore, digitally-based methods of service delivery negate the significant value placed on face-to-face interactions by CALD communities, particularly in relation to health (at page 81).

Cyber-Safety

As discussed above, Senior CALD Australians may have limited experience with, or opportunities to engage with, new technologies. This makes Senior CALD Australians disproportionately vulnerable to exploitation online, and exposes them to increased risks and threats by malicious dealers (for example, they may be increasingly vulnerable when faced by scams which ask for bank details in a seemingly legitimate manner, or which make empty promises of financial gain if personal information is provided).

Unfamiliarity with new technologies may also result in the undesired and/or unintentional release of personal information, such as can occur through lacking understanding of, and failing to engage, security and privacy mechanisms (for example in relation to social media).

To counter this, FECCA calls for increased opportunities for Senior CALD Australians to engage with training programs that can assist them to safely engage online. Training programs must be culturally sensitive, user-friendly, and engage with in-language materials, and interpreters, where possible. Training programs should facilitate both understanding of and competency in engaging with digital mediums.

Service providers that seek to engage consumers online must also ensure that they explain any risks associated with providing information online, in plain English and/or in language, have consumer help-lines to assist with online engagement, and offer alternatives to online engagement.

Cyber-Racism and Cyber-Bullying

Cyber-racism often refers to material 'published on the internet which offends, insults, humiliates or intimidates people of a certain nationality. Offensive material can be in a number of forms, such as images, blogs, videos and comments on web forums like Facebook'ⁱ, and is recognised as a very real and emerging threat, with perpetrators able to hide behind the veil of anonymity that the internet provides.

It is certainly likely that Senior CALD web users will encounter forms of online racist materials that they may find derogatory or insulting. This is likely to have a negative impact on their confidence and willingness to engage with new digital technologies in the future.

Cyber-bullying, that is bullying through information and communication technologies, has also been highlighted by our constituents as a real and emerging concern for older CALD Australians, who may be ill-informed as to how to deal with online harassment.

To this effect, FECCA calls for stronger regulation and monitoring in the arena of cyber-racism and cyber-bullying, as well as widespread education throughout the community about the unacceptable use of new technologies to offend, harass, insult and humiliate. This education should also encompass strategies for dealing with cyber-racism and bullying, such as reporting avenues and how people can protect themselves from, or seek to avoid, cyber-racism/bullying at an individual level. It is imperative that this education/information reaches Senior CALD Australians through the training and engagement mechanisms discussed earlier in this submission.

Finally, FECCA recommends that the Committee look to ensure that there is Senior CALD representation on the Joint Select committee, to ensure the views of Senior CALD Australians are adequately reflected in actions going forward.

FECCA thanks the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety for the opportunity to contribute to this review.

ⁱ Freedom, Respect, Equality, Dignity: Action, NGO Submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Australia (2010)

http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/ngos/NACLCHRLRC_Australia77.pdf at page 54.