



**Media Release  
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## **Catholic Bishops propose less confronting Citizenship requirements**

A Commission of Catholic Bishops has urged the federal government to modify its proposed changes to citizenship requirements so that language and knowledge requirements are met gradually, rather than being judged by a test.

The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life said the government's proposed changes, which are currently before the Senate, were a recognition of the importance of the Citizenship process.

"We agree wholeheartedly with the Government that it is very important for those seeking citizenship to be helped to appreciate the significance of the step that they are taking," said Bishop Joseph Grech, the Bishops' Delegate for Immigration issues.

"It is also important that prospective citizens have a sound grasp of the language and some of the basic heritage and values of their new nation."

However, the Bishops said they were concerned that forcing Citizenship applicants to undergo a formal test of language and values would hinder rather than enhance the process.

"A formal test would be particularly difficult for some older people and for many whose first language is not English," Bishop Grech said. "An unfortunate consequence of this confrontational approach is that some people could be discouraged from even attempting to seek Citizenship."

Bishop Grech said that a test would not necessarily show that a prospective citizen had taken Australian values into their life, merely that they had learnt the required responses.

An alternative approach would be to make greater efforts to impart an appreciation and knowledge of the English language and Australian values from the beginning of the migration process.

"This could even be through the undertaking of a formal course, but without a confronting and possibly alienating test," Bishop Grech said.

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