



Australian Muslim Women's
Centre for Human Rights
Equality without exception

**Submission into The Second Action Plan Consultation – National Plan to End
Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.**

Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights

July 2026

About us

This submission has been developed by the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR). AMWCHR is an organisation of Muslim women leading change to advance the rights and status of Muslim women in Australia.

We bring 35 years of experience in providing one-to-one support to Muslim women, young women, and children, developing and delivering community education and capacity-building programs to raise awareness and shift prevailing attitudes. We also work as advocates - researching, publishing, informing policy decisions and reform initiatives as well as offering training and consultation to increase sector capacity to recognise and respond to the needs of Muslim women, young women, and children.

As one of the leading voices for Muslim women's rights in Australia, we challenge the most immediate and pertinent issues Muslim women face every day. We promote Muslim women's right to self-determination by recognising the inherent agency that already exists and bringing issues of inequality and disadvantage to light.

AMWCHR works with individuals, the community, partner organisations, and government to advocate for equality within the Australian context. This submission is designed to contribute greater awareness and understanding of domestic, family and sexual violence service, support, and prevention priorities for Muslim women, young women, and their communities and call upon the government to acknowledge the needs of communities impacted by structural racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia.

Acknowledgement of Country

AMWCHR acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands our organisation is located on and where we conduct our work. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. AMWCHR is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters, and seas and their rich contribution to society.

This submission recognises that gender, race, and religion intersect to create multiple forms of discrimination and violence against Muslim women, particularly in a context of growing Islamophobia. It also recognises that preventing prejudice in all forms is bound to the struggles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Before we can successfully tackle issues within our communities, we must address the ongoing impacts of colonisation, systemic racism, and discrimination in all its forms in this country.



Introduction

The Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR) offers this submission to reflect the priorities for Muslim women and young women in the Second Action Plan under Australia's *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 (the National Plan)*. As a specialist family violence service and settlement service provider working from and within Muslim communities, many of the women and young women we support experience unique challenges as well as systemic barriers and structural discrimination when interacting with the Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFS) service system. We therefore welcome the opportunity to provide our expert insight into shaping the National Plan. This submission outlines AMWCHR's recommendations with regards to the National Plan for the coming five years, with key consideration given to highlighting priorities for Muslim women, children, and families in Australia.

Muslim women exist in the same racialised and minoritised context as many diverse migrant and refugee women, but we know from experience that Muslim women are also uniquely politicised through racist narratives about Muslim men as inherently violent and Muslim women as inherently passive victims of that violence. As a community we have been approached with suspicion, talked about in political arenas to further racist narratives and political posturing for many years and this means Muslim communities experience unique forms of exclusion and harm, these harmful narratives that currently thrive in mainstream political discourse and media, directly impact community safety and wellbeing which in turn prevents and undermines safe engagement with service systems, policing and justice systems.

We note the significant omission in the consultation papers and process to meaningfully identify and engage with Muslim and migrant victim-survivors as central to a national plan to end violence against women and children. This raises great concern for the foundations of the plan if the invisibility of systemic barriers and harm is left in the periphery of our national priorities. We are at a time when the rise of far-right, anti-Muslim, anti-migrant, anti-rights movements are in full swing, infiltrating mainstream media and politics making more people unsafe. Now is the time for government to address the issues that increase risk, harm and isolation for certain groups by increasing equity, access and safety.

The recommendations in this submission are based on insights formed through working with Muslim women and young women and are further informed by consultation with our staff and communities. We urge the Government to consider these recommendations to ensure the National Plan reflect Australia's commitment to ending violence against women and children – *all* women and children.

Priority area 1: Victim-survivor

Improving safety, support and recovery for victim-survivors from Muslim, migrant and refugee communities requires holistic, culturally safe, and intersectional approaches. Community-led responses are essential to achieving equitable and effective outcomes but must be adequately and sustainably funded to better reflect the diversity of Australian communities. The National Plan needs to focus on developing sector capacity to collect data and better address the impacts of legislation such as coercive control on marginalised/minoritised communities along with other emerging issues such as technology-facilitated abuse.

What service or system responses would make the biggest difference to victim-survivors' safety, wellbeing, healing and recovery?

- Access to safe and secure housing and accommodation suitable for Muslim women.
- Holistic support for victim-survivors – introduce and strengthen collaborative models to support systems working together, as well as interrogate and address system gaps and barriers. In particular, training and working with community health and mental health settings and Settlement support services.
- Embedding anti-racism and cultural safety – addressing structural racism to prevent multicultural communities being excluded from 'mainstream' service design.
- Reviewing residency/visa barriers to accessing essential supports – migrant Muslim women on temporary visa are still unable to access housing, income, and health supports in meaningful timeframes that reduce risk.
- Family case work model to build capacity for families to remain together and address risk and drivers of violence.
- Improving access to intensive and holistic support and recognising women may need concurrent essential supports such as housing support, financial and material aid, legal supports, NDIS, and assistance with migration.
- Increased investment and expansion of existing and new specialist ethno-specific and multicultural DFSV services to meet demand and continue to provide capacity building support to wider sector to improve culturally sensitive and inclusive practice.
- Inclusive practice standards which require organisations to invest in diverse recruitment and employment practices to strengthen and expand the diversity of workforce to better reflect Australian society.
- Dedicated investment and employer incentives to support Muslim, migrant and refugee women education and employment pathways into DFSV workforce/employment.
- Dedicated services for Muslim young people impacted by DFSV, including establishing youth focussed supports and embedding DFSV training into educational setting wellbeing supports to support safe and effective referrals.
- Addressing issues that impact misidentification of Muslim and migrant women through addressing systems abuse.

What helps people access support earlier, and what barriers prevent people from seeking help or engaging with systems and services?

- Experiences of institutional and systemic racism and Islamophobia are a significant barrier to help seeking.
- Access to interpreters as well as translated and audio resources as a standard practice when engaging with services.
- Targeted capacity building for faith leaders and broader community so that access to supports can be better facilitated when initial disclosures are made.
- Services that reinforce systems of power and minimise women's experience as experts in their own lives lead to adverse outcomes for victim-survivors who then are more likely to disengage from service system.
- Negative perception and experience of engaging with mainstream services prevent access. AMWCHR's (2025) research findings show that Muslim women harbour fear of authorities such as the Child Protection System, Police, and the legal system due to the harms they have come across within these systems.
- Focus on building workforce capacity in metro and regional/rural areas (including Tasmania) to facilitate quality access to culturally safe services for Muslim communities, such as those provided by organisations like AMWCHR – being able to account for faith, migration, cultural contexts when identifying and responding to DFSV risk.

What current or emerging issues should the Second Action Plan address, including in relation to coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse?

- Build evidence base, tracking the impacts of criminalisation of coercive control in First Nations, migrant/refugee, Muslim, and other marginalised communities.
- Support community-led responses and education across emerging issues to ensure communities who are marginalised are engaged in education, dialogue, and awareness raising and capacity building initiatives.
- Need for sustained investment into targeted men's behaviour change programs for migrant and refugee communities – in particular those delivered in-language, with cultural contexts in community settings.

What gaps remain in addressing the needs of diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

- Recognising diversity, intersectionality, and lived experience – migrant communities are not homogenous nor do we fit into a single group or dominant identity. Funding collaborative system responses across disability, LGBTQIA+, health and youth to better recognise the diversity within multicultural communities.
- Workforce diversity and capacity building – skills of bicultural/multicultural staff to be: better valued in recruitment, improved safety and supports in workplaces career progression into leadership roles, and increased understanding of unique issues of burnout for bicultural/multicultural staff in mainstream and community settings.

Priority area 2: Prevention and early intervention

Preventing DFSV in Muslim, migrant and refugee communities requires sustained investment in culturally responsive, community-led prevention and early intervention initiatives that engages Muslim women, youth, families, and men and addresses the drivers of violence, whilst recognising community strengths and building community capacity. A focus on capturing data and strengthening research is needed to build a stronger evidence base of the vital work done in settlement-based prevention programs.

What would make the biggest difference in preventing and ultimately ending violence?

- Consistent funding, both at a state and federal level is necessary to mobilise and sustain crucial prevention efforts. Prevention has been repeatedly underfunded, and even more so for Muslim communities. It requires ongoing and tailored efforts to deliver programs, services and initiatives which tackle the drivers of violence including through settlement, parenting, for young people and within communities. Prevention efforts must match investment in response and must reach those most excluded from services. This work must be led by organisations who have established trust and engagement with communities.
- Prioritising and resourcing primary prevention efforts such as community education programs that can building capacity within communities to respond to DFSV before it reaches point of crisis and disrupt generational violence. This can include:
 - Culturally responsive prevention programs specifically designed for young Muslim women.
 - Engaging Muslim boys and men in prevention, including programs designed for Muslim boys at primary school age and address online harm, particularly as it relates to online communities that perpetuate misogyny (i.e., manosphere).
- Working to improve Muslim women's rights to access safe and dignified religious divorce procedures.

How can existing efforts to prevent violence be strengthened or built upon at the individual, community, organisational, institutional and societal levels?

- Increasing evidence base through research. Strengthening data collection to address data gaps including religion, visa status and ethnicity.
- Respectful Relationships education to be designed for diverse communities and delivered with cultural understanding to encourage greater engagement.

How can governments, communities, schools, workplaces, online platforms and others better support people to recognise and respond to harmful attitudes and behaviours?

- Develop a standardised Anti-racism framework introduced and uniformly implemented across all social services including DFSV, health, education and housing – framework to include accountability mechanisms.

What prevention and early intervention approaches appear most promising or effective, and what is needed to strengthen or expand them?

- Recognising specialist areas of DFSV including Sexual Assault and Forced Marriage require tailored prevention approaches from trusted organisations that are embedded within community.
- Leverage the role of settlement providers who have established trust and safety with newly arrived cohorts and are best placed to incorporate prevention programs throughout the delivery of settlement programs and services. We have practice evidence that supports newly arrived cohorts, including men, are more likely to engage with community programs early in their settlement journey.

What emerging issues should the Second Action Plan address in relation to primary prevention and early intervention?

- Prioritising research into online harm for Muslim communities to formulate prevention strategies.
- Develop a whole-of-family DFSV case management model to mitigate the risk of families disengaging from services – this would be implemented on a case-by-case basis for PUVs and their families with capacity and commitment to change DFSV behaviours. Practice evidence suggest that family preservation can be a key driver for migrant and refugee families disengaging with the DFSV system. A whole-of-family approach can address this risk as well as act as a facilitating factor for engagement with services and support.
- Focussed Sexual Assault education community programs for Muslim women, youth and parents to raise awareness of rights, help seeking and support services. The programs can address the stigma and experiences of SA trauma in the context of Muslim women, unpacking their understandings of impacts and ideas of justice and healing.

Priority area 3: Children and young people in their own right

AMWCHR recognises the need for community-based services that provide early intervention for Muslim youth support, community education, and family centred responses that address the impacts of DFSV, migration, and trauma. The Second Action Plan must strengthen workforce capability to engage with diverse youth cohort and their intersectional experiences of harm and marginalisation. Expanded prevention and online safety education is needed to ensure Muslim children and youth are afforded access to support and safety.

What would make the biggest difference to improving safety, recovery and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people affected by this violence?

- Fund targeted services to build capacity to respond to children and young people affected by violence.

- Targeted community education program for Muslim youth to raise awareness around safety, consent and healthy relationships.
- Specialised youth role within DFSV casework context – to respond to needs of Muslim children and young people with DFSV contexts and offering referral pathways for youth programs.
- Training and collaborative practice to work with Adolescent Violence in the Home (AVITH) practitioners, developing culturally safe supports for Muslim and migrant families.
- Restorative interventions for Youth in the justice system as victim-survivors of DFSV including group healing and recovery, psycho-social community education programs, safe and culturally appropriate mental health and housing options for Muslim children and young people.

How can governments, services, education settings, families, communities and others better recognise and respond to children and young people experiencing violence or harm?

- Prioritise the delivery of training for DFSV services to implement MARAM risk assessment for multicultural and migrant children and young people.

What approaches are most effective in supporting children and young people who are using violence or displaying harmful sexual behaviours to take accountability, change behaviours, and reduce harm?

- Working with the parents in culturally safe practice to identify and address the violence and drivers of violence.
- Culturally safe support group for parents experiencing adolescent violence in the home that acknowledges the impacts of migration trauma on families.

How should the Second Action Plan respond to current or emerging forms of harm affecting children and young people, including technology-facilitated abuse, harmful online content, and violence within peer and dating relationships?

- Community-led education programs in school.
- Parenting programs specific to online harm and healthy access and use of online – developmental and social expectations.
- Research into the risks of online apps such as grooming, image-based abuse and exploitation.

How can children and young people be meaningfully involved in shaping the policies, programs and services that affect them?

- Diversify youth advisory bodies and utilise accessible platforms for youth to provide policy, program, and service feedback.
- Fund research and consultation that centres lived experience of youth in Muslim community.

Priority area 4: People who use violence

To end violence against women and children, primary prevention approaches require a stronger commitment to engagement with communities through settlement services, culturally safe prevention initiatives designed for boys and men. Responses must also recognise DFSV in multicultural contexts, including situations involving multiple PUVs across extended and transnational family networks and acknowledge the impact of migration and settlement trauma on experiences of DFSV.

What would make the biggest difference in preventing and responding earlier to the use of violence?

- Ensuring settlement services have significant capacity to identify and respond to issues of DFSV.
- Engaging boys and men in prevention.
- Provision of accessible, in-language and culturally safe Men's Behaviour Change programs (MBCP).
- Increase the capacity to provide MBCP to meet the demand.
- Recognising that there may be multiple perpetrators of violence – both family overseas and in Australia, including multigenerational families living together.

Priority area 5: System integration and workforce

System responses can be strengthened through collaboration and partnerships between mainstream and specialist services but also between the specialist services and across sectors such as settlement, community organisations and community health settings. These relationship building investments create increased knowledge, integrated service systems and supports a diverse workforce, overall building a more responsive DFSV service system.

What would make the biggest difference in creating a more coordinated and connected system response for people affected by violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence and people using violence?

- Strengthening meaningful collaboration between mainstream services and specialist services, ensuring adequate and fair sharing of resources and funding.

What workforce capabilities, supports, or conditions are most needed to strengthen prevention, early intervention, response and recovery?

- Funding for targeted services to collaborate with one another such to build capacity as allies and exchange knowledge between First Nations, LGBTQIA+, Disability and

Multicultural services better responding to systemic intersectional discrimination and harm.

What approaches or models appear most effective in improving collaboration, coordination and information sharing across services, systems and programs?

- Partnerships, Communities of Practice, and collaborative projects that focus on system and sector change to address inequity and systemic barriers for intersectionally disadvantaged cohorts.
- Sector practice groups that allow for cross sector collaboration and practice development.

What supports do specialist and universal services need to provide inclusive, accessible and response services?

- Increased/proportional funding for targeted service such as AMWCHR to reflect the need and demand – i.e., ABS (2022) data shows that nearly half of Australians (48.2%) have a parent born overseas, with 27.6 per cent born overseas.
- Funded community-based services that support the specialist DFSV service system.
- Increased funding for targeted services to deliver training and consultation, delivered for mainstream services.

What evidence, workforce or system gaps should the Second Action Plan prioritise to strengthen implementation and improve outcomes over time?

- Embedding lived experience – supporting/facilitating the involvement of lived experience advocates throughout the service delivery system.

Reference List

AMWCHR. (2025). *Safer Systems, Safer Families: Addressing systemic disadvantage for Muslim communities within Victoria's child protection system*. Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022). 2021 Census: Nearly half of Australians have a parent born overseas. Retrieved from: [2021 Census: Nearly half of Australians have a parent born overseas | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)