



Impact Advocacy Consulting

Building Bridges, Not Barriers

Submission to the Second Action Plan Consultation National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

Submitted by
Impact Advocacy Consultancy

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Executive Summary

This submission highlights the urgent need for stronger culturally responsive prevention, early intervention and systems accountability measures within the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032.

Drawing from professional practice across the domestic and family violence (DFV), multicultural and community sectors, lived experience advocacy, and direct engagement with multicultural women and families, this submission identifies significant gaps affecting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities across Australia.

Key concerns include migration-related abuse, coercive control within multicultural contexts, systems abuse and post-separation abuse, spiritual abuse, sexual violence and sexual coercion, language and cultural barriers, limited culturally safe pathways, insufficient multicultural lived experience representation and inadequate investment in community-based prevention and early intervention initiatives.

This submission argues that prevention and early intervention efforts cannot be fully effective unless they are culturally responsive, community-informed and grounded in the lived realities of multicultural women and children experiencing violence, migration vulnerability and systemic disadvantage.

The submission also highlights the need for stronger national recognition of migration-related abuse, culturally responsive prevention strategies, systems accountability, multicultural lived experience leadership and trauma-informed approaches across legal, community and institutional responses.



This submission proposes the development of a **National Multicultural Domestic and Family Violence Strategy** as a key national priority, alongside increased investment in culturally responsive prevention, multilingual education, lived experience leadership and workforce capability.

About [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is a Queensland-based Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Advocate, Lived Experience Advocate, Multicultural Community Advocate and Education and Training Program Manager working across prevention, early intervention, coercive control education, workplace capability-building and community engagement.

She currently works within the domestic and family violence prevention sector, leading and contributing to education, training and community initiatives focused on prevention, early intervention, systems awareness and culturally responsive practice.

[REDACTED] has extensive experience supporting multicultural communities, particularly women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds experiencing domestic and family violence, migration-related abuse, coercive control, systems abuse and barriers to accessing safe and culturally appropriate support pathways.

Her work combines professional expertise, community engagement and lived experience advocacy, with a strong focus on prevention, accountability, inclusion and culturally informed responses to domestic and family violence.

Her work includes:

- Workplace capability-building and DFV prevention initiatives,
- Multicultural community education, advocacy, support and referral pathways navigation,
- Coercive control education and early intervention,
- Lived experience advocacy,
- Culturally responsive training, consultation and community engagement for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

She has also contributed to government advisory groups, lived experience working groups and multicultural DFV initiatives focused on improving responses for women and children affected by violence.



Practice Experience and Community Observations

Across both professional and community-based work, significant systemic and structural barriers continue to impact multicultural women experiencing violence. These barriers frequently include visa dependency, migration vulnerability, language barriers, limited access to interpreting services, financial dependence, social and cultural isolation, distrust of systems and limited understanding of Australian legal processes. Many women also experience pressure from family, community and cultural structures, alongside responses from services and institutions that may feel culturally unsafe or inaccessible.

In community settings, many women report not recognising coercive control or non-physical abuse until violence has significantly escalated. There is also growing concern regarding migration-related systems abuse, including withholding passports and documentation, threats relating to visa status, restricted access to finances and services, misuse of migration and legal systems, and barriers preventing women from safely maintaining international family and cultural connections.

An important issue requiring greater national consideration is the international impact of family law and protection systems on migrant women and children. For many multicultural women, Australian court orders and parenting arrangements may create additional risks or legal uncertainty around international travel.

This can significantly impact women's and children's ability to maintain meaningful cultural, linguistic and family connections with their country of origin and maternal family networks, contributing to social isolation, fear, and long-term disconnection from essential support systems, family relationships and cultural identity. Despite its significant impact on multicultural victim-survivors and children, this issue remains largely under-recognised within broader national DFV discussions.

Priority Area: Prevention and Early Intervention

The most effective prevention strategies are those embedded within everyday community settings where people live, work, learn, worship and connect. Prevention efforts should move beyond awareness campaigns alone and instead prioritise practical community education, culturally responsive coercive control education, active bystander capability, safe referral pathways, trauma-informed engagement and long-term behaviour and culture change. At its core, prevention should educate communities, advocate for cultural and systemic change, and activate individuals to take safe and meaningful action when harm occurs.



Prevention should not sit solely within specialist DFV organisations. It must also be embedded across workplaces, schools, sporting clubs, multicultural organisations, faith communities and broader community settings to ensure prevention messages and support pathways are accessible, relevant and sustainable.

Multicultural Communities and Migration-Related Abuse

Nearly one in three Australians was born overseas, making culturally responsive approaches essential to the effectiveness and accessibility of domestic and family violence prevention and response systems.

Migration-related abuse remains significantly under-recognised despite its profound impact on victim-survivors. Multicultural women frequently experience intersecting vulnerabilities including visa dependency, financial disadvantage, language barriers, racism and discrimination, social isolation, cultural stigma, fear of systems and reduced access to culturally safe services.

Many women face significant barriers to leaving violent relationships due to concerns regarding immigration status, family separation, financial insecurity and limited access to culturally responsive support services and safe referral pathways.

To strengthen outcomes for multicultural communities, the Second Action Plan should prioritise the development of a **National Multicultural Domestic and Family Violence Strategy**.

This should be supported by investment in multilingual coercive control education, culturally responsive prevention and early intervention initiatives, improved access to interpreting services, and greater recognition of migration-related abuse within policy and practice frameworks. The Plan should also support the recruitment and inclusion of bicultural, multilingual and culturally diverse professionals within domestic and family violence services and related sectors to improve cultural responsiveness, accessibility and community trust.

Systems Abuse and Post-Separation Abuse

Systems abuse remains one of the most harmful and under-recognised forms of domestic and family violence. Many women and children continue to experience coercive control after separation through the misuse of legal, administrative and institutional processes designed to provide protection and justice. This can include



repeated litigation, procedural manipulation, vexatious complaints, financial exhaustion, and the weaponisation of family law systems and other institutions as tools of ongoing control. The cumulative impact of these practices can be significant, affecting safety, wellbeing, financial stability, recovery and long-term participation in community life.

The Second Action Plan should formally recognise systems abuse within domestic and family violence policy and practice frameworks and support more coordinated, trauma-informed responses across relevant systems. This should include stronger accountability mechanisms, measures to reduce the misuse of legal and administrative processes as tools of ongoing coercive control, and enhanced protections for children and victim-survivors during post-separation proceedings.

There must also be greater accountability, clearer boundaries and stronger protections to ensure women and children can ultimately experience safety, stability and recovery following separation. Systems should not become vehicles for ongoing coercive control. Consideration should be given to appropriate consequences for those who repeatedly weaponise legal and institutional processes to continue abuse, as well as greater accountability within systems that unintentionally enable, overlook or perpetuate these patterns of harm.

Lived Experience Leadership

Lived experience engagement must move beyond symbolic consultation.

Women with lived experience — particularly multicultural women — hold critical expertise that should directly inform policy, prevention, systems reform, workforce capability, education, service design and accountability mechanisms.

However, lived experience participation across many systems and consultation processes often remains underpaid, emotionally unsafe, culturally unsafe and disconnected from genuine decision-making power. Multicultural women continue to be significantly underrepresented within leadership, policy and reform spaces despite experiencing unique and intersecting barriers.

There is a need for more meaningful and sustainable approaches to lived experience engagement that move beyond symbolic consultation and towards genuine co-design, shared decision-making and culturally safe participation.

The Second Action Plan should support stronger remuneration standards for lived experience participation, culturally safe engagement frameworks, survivor leadership



pathways, multicultural lived experience advisory structures and trauma-informed wellbeing safeguards that recognise the emotional impact of this work.

The Second Action Plan should prioritise a more culturally responsive, prevention-focused and accountable national response to domestic and family violence. This includes embedding meaningful lived experience leadership throughout policy, service design, prevention initiatives, systems reform and accountability processes, with stronger remuneration standards, culturally safe engagement frameworks, multicultural lived experience advisory structures, survivor leadership pathways and genuine co-design mechanisms.

Further investment is needed to strengthen community-based prevention and early intervention initiatives, expand active bystander capability across workplaces, schools, faith communities and other community settings, and support approaches that educate, advocate and activate individuals and communities to recognise harm, challenge harmful norms and contribute to safer and more respectful communities.

The Plan should also strengthen workforce capability in coercive control, trauma-informed practice, migration-related abuse and cultural safety, while improving language access, interpreting pathways and culturally responsive referral systems. A greater focus on workforce diversity, including the recruitment and inclusion of bicultural, multilingual and culturally diverse professionals, is essential to delivering culturally safe, accessible and effective responses for multicultural communities.

Key Recommendations

1. Develop a National Multicultural Domestic and Family Violence Strategy.
2. Increase investment in multilingual coercive control education and culturally responsive prevention.
3. Formally recognise systems abuse and strengthen post-separation protections.
4. Strengthen multicultural lived experience leadership and co-design.
5. Expand community-based prevention and active bystander initiatives.
6. Strengthen workforce capability in coercive control, migration-related abuse and cultural safety.
7. Improve language access, interpreting pathways and culturally responsive referral systems.



Conclusion

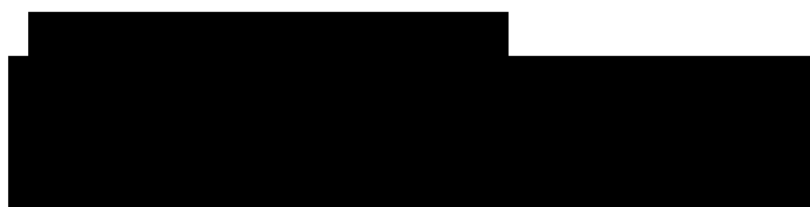
Ending violence against women and children requires more than crisis response. It requires prevention, accountability, cultural responsiveness and meaningful inclusion of lived expertise.

Multicultural women and migrant communities must not remain on the margins of national violence prevention efforts.

Australia has an opportunity to strengthen the Second Action Plan through a more culturally responsive and community-informed national approach that recognises the realities of coercive control, migration-related abuse, systems abuse and cultural isolation.

Meaningful prevention and systems reform will only be possible when the voices and expertise of those most impacted are genuinely included in shaping policy, practice and national responses.

I welcome the opportunity to continue contributing to national conversations, consultation processes and reform initiatives aimed at ending violence against women and children, particularly in relation to multicultural communities, lived experience leadership, prevention and systems reform.



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