



Reaching the Women and Children the System Misses

*Recognising and Resourcing Volunteer-Led Grassroots
Multicultural Organisations in Family Violence
Prevention and Recovery*

Submission to: Australian Department of Social Services

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

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About Initiatives for Women in Need Inc (IWiN)

Initiatives for Women in Need Inc. was founded in 2013 with a core focus on supporting and advocating for women and families affected by family and domestic violence, gender inequality, social isolation and related disadvantage. From its foundation, IWiN has worked to create culturally safe networks, amplify marginalised women's voices, support women's wellbeing and advocate for systems that better recognise the lived realities of women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

IWiN is a community-led, volunteer-driven organisation based in the ACT. For more than a decade, IWiN has worked with women and families from multicultural, migrant and refugee backgrounds, including women impacted by family and domestic violence, financial hardship, racism, social isolation, lack of service access, mental health impacts and economic insecurity.

IWiN's advocacy on domestic violence and its impact on ACT multicultural communities was recognised through the 2021 ACT Multicultural Champion of the Year Award. This recognition reflects IWiN's sustained work in raising awareness, supporting women, building community trust, advocating for culturally responsive systems and giving voice to women whose experiences are often invisible in mainstream policy and service settings.

Most IWiN programs are culturally tailored for marginalised communities. Programs such as NETRI, the ORANGE Skirt Social Enterprise Project, WOMEN UNBOUND magazine and YUVA are designed to create culturally safe networks, strengthen women's confidence, amplify lived experience, promote social inclusion, support leadership, and create economic and civic participation pathways. These programs are not specialist crisis services, but they play an important role in prevention, early intervention, recovery and empowerment for women, children and families affected by family violence, gender inequality and related social harms.

IWiN strongly supports the ambition of the [Second Action Plan under the National Plan](#) to end violence against women and children in one generation. However, this ambition will not be achieved unless the Second Action Plan reaches the women and children who are currently missed by formal systems, and unless it recognises and resources the grassroots community organisations that are closest to them.



Executive Summary

IWiN welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the *Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*.

This submission argues that the *Second Action Plan* must do more to reach multicultural women and children who are currently missed by formal family violence systems.

Many women and children from multicultural, migrant and refugee communities remain invisible because they may not report violence, may not recognise coercive control or financial abuse as violence, or may fear stigma, racism, visa consequences, homelessness, child protection involvement or retaliation. They may also lack trusted information, language access, income, childcare or culturally safe support. Many seek help first through informal community networks rather than formal services.

Grassroots, volunteer-led multicultural organisations are often closest to the women and children the system misses. They provide trusted first contact, culturally safe spaces, community education, advocacy, peer support, food support, referrals, leadership opportunities and recovery pathways. Yet these organisations are often underfunded and structurally disadvantaged by funding systems that favour larger providers with greater administrative capacity.

Founded in 2013, IWiN has worked for more than a decade to support and advocate for women and families affected by family and domestic violence, gender inequality and social isolation. IWiN's culturally tailored programs — including NETRI, ORANGE Skirt Social Enterprise Project, WOMEN UNBOUND magazine and YUVA — strengthen culturally safe networks, amplify women's voices, build leadership, promote social inclusion and create economic pathways. IWiN's advocacy on domestic violence and its impact on ACT multicultural communities was recognised through the 2021 ACT Multicultural Champion of the Year Award.

IWiN recommends that the Second Action Plan:

- fund grassroots multicultural organisations as essential prevention and recovery infrastructure;
- invest in culturally safe prevention and early intervention before violence escalates;
- build trusted pathways for women and children who do not report violence or access mainstream services;
- make economic security, lived experience and community-led evidence central to long-term recovery and reform.

To reach the women and children the system misses, the Second Action Plan must fund the grassroots, prevent violence before crisis, build trusted pathways to safety, and make recovery real.



Key Recommendations at a Glance

IWiN makes four recommendations to help the Second Action Plan reach multicultural women and children who are currently missed by formal systems.

Recommendation	Priority actions
1. Fund the grassroots Establish a dedicated funding mechanism for volunteer-led grassroots multicultural organisations working with women, children and families affected by family violence and gender inequality.	• Provide flexible, multi-year funding. • Simplify application and reporting processes. • Fund grassroots organisations as equal partners, not unpaid access points.
2. Prevent violence before crisis Invest in culturally safe, community-led prevention and early intervention.	• Fund education on rights, coercive control, financial abuse and safe help-seeking. • Support women's leadership, youth leadership, peer networks and social inclusion. • Design programs with multicultural women, young people and lived-experience voices.
3. Build trusted pathways to safety Create culturally safe pathways for women and children who do not report violence or access mainstream services.	• Establish multicultural family violence navigators. • Build warm referrals to legal, housing, income, health and specialist family violence support. • Train services in cultural safety, trauma-informed practice, interpreter use and migration-related abuse.
4. Make recovery real Recognise that long-term safety requires economic security, voice, connection and accountability.	• Link recovery with financial literacy, employment, skills recognition, childcare and social enterprise. • Embed lived experience and community-led evidence in policy and evaluation. • Measure whether funding reaches multicultural women, children and grassroots organisations.

1. Focus of this submission

IWiN recognises the importance of all five priority areas identified for the Second Action Plan. **However, this submission focuses most strongly on:**

Priority 2: Prevention and early intervention, because IWiN's work is deeply grounded in culturally safe community education, women's leadership, social inclusion, economic empowerment, voice, wellbeing and early support.

Priority 5: System integration and workforce, because IWiN believes the current service and funding system does not adequately recognise, integrate or resource small



grassroots multicultural organisations, even though these organisations often have the strongest reach into communities where violence is under-reported.

This submission also provides supporting comments on victim-survivor recovery, children and young people, and culturally informed work with people who use violence.

IWiN's central argument is that ending violence against women and children requires more than crisis response. It requires investment in prevention, early intervention, recovery, community trust and grassroots infrastructure. It requires reaching women and children before violence escalates, before formal reporting occurs, and before harm becomes intergenerational.

2. Community Trust, Social Cohesion and the Case for Funding Grassroots Organisations

The Scanlon Foundation Research Institute's *Mapping Social Cohesion 2025* Report provides strong evidence that local community bonds, neighbourhood cohesion and participation in community groups are critical foundations of Australia's social cohesion.

The Scanlon Foundation's *Mapping Social Cohesion 2025* report shows that local community bonds and participation in community groups are strongly associated with trust, belonging, wellbeing and acceptance of diversity. These findings support IWiN's argument that volunteer-led grassroots multicultural organisations should be recognised and funded as essential social infrastructure, not treated as informal or unpaid access points for larger service systems.

The report finds that despite social, economic and political pressures, Australia's social cohesion has remained relatively stable, supported by the strength of local relationships, neighbourhood bonds and community participation. In 2025, 82% of adults agreed that people in their local area are willing to help neighbours, 80% agreed that neighbours from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together, and 80% reported feeling that they belong in their neighbourhood.

Table 1: Neighbourhood social cohesion indicators, Australia, 2025

Adapted from Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, Mapping Social Cohesion 2025, Figure 14.

Neighbourhood cohesion indicator	2025 result
People in local area are willing to help neighbours	82%
Neighbours from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together	80%
I feel like I belong in my neighbourhood	80%
My neighbourhood has a strong sense of community	64%
I am able to have a say on issues that matter locally	57%

This table 1 shows that local neighbourhoods remain one of Australia's strongest sources of social trust and connection. For family violence prevention and recovery, these



findings matter because many women and children first seek safety through trusted local relationships rather than formal systems.

The report also finds that 55% of Australians were involved in some form of community, social, religious, civic or political group in 2025. This included 41% involved in social or religious groups such as sports, arts, craft, ethnic and multicultural clubs and groups, and 21% involved in community support groups.

Table 2: Community participation in Australia, 2025

Adapted from Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2025*, Figure 15.

Type of community participation	2025 result
Any community, social, religious, civic or political group	55%
Social/religious groups, including sports, arts, craft and multicultural groups	41%
Community support groups	21%
Civic and political groups	17%

The table above demonstrates that community organisations are not marginal actors. They are part of the everyday infrastructure through which people build trust, belonging, social connection and resilience. Volunteer-led grassroots multicultural organisations such as IWiN operate within this community infrastructure and help translate informal trust into prevention, early intervention, referral and recovery pathways.

The report further shows that cohesive neighbourhoods are associated with stronger happiness, trust, belonging and acceptance of diversity. People living in cohesive neighbourhoods were 65% more likely to move from not having a strong sense of belonging in 2024 to having one in 2025, 2.2 times more likely to move from not trusting people generally in 2024 to trusting people in 2025, and 2.1 times more likely to move from not agreeing that multiculturalism has been good for Australia in 2024 to agreeing in 2025.

Why this matters for family violence prevention

Strong local connections are not only a social cohesion outcome. They are a prevention asset. For multicultural women and children affected by family, domestic and sexual violence, trusted community relationships can be the first step from silence to safety. Funding grassroots organisations therefore strengthens the social conditions that make early disclosure, safe referral and long-term recovery possible.

The report also highlights why culturally safe grassroots organisations are needed. People born in Asia and Africa were significantly more likely to report mistreatment and discrimination. In 2025, 45% of people born in Asia or Africa reported being made to feel different or as if they did not belong, 50% experienced mistreatment in at least one measured area, and 40% experienced discrimination based on skin colour, religion or ethnic origin.



Table 3: Experiences of exclusion and discrimination among people born in Asia or Africa, 2025

Adapted from Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2025*, Figure 7 and Table A1.

Indicator	People born in Asia or Africa	Total adults
Made to feel different or as if they did not belong	45%	30%
Experienced verbal or physical threats or abuse	26%	21%
Not offered a job or treated unfairly at work	27%	12%
Experienced mistreatment in any measured area	50%	37%
Experienced discrimination based on skin colour, religion or ethnic origin	40%	16%
Believe racism is a fairly or very big problem in Australia	65%	67%

This table shows that multicultural communities experience higher levels of exclusion and discrimination. For women and children experiencing family violence, these barriers can compound fear, isolation and distrust of formal systems. Volunteer-led grassroots multicultural organisations are therefore essential because they understand racism, migration stress, language barriers, community pressure and the reasons women may not report violence.

These findings strengthen IWIn’s central argument: *large NGOs and specialist services are essential, but they cannot replace the trust, reach and cultural knowledge held by grassroots organisations.* A stronger family violence system requires both: well-resourced specialist services and generously funded volunteer-led grassroots multicultural organisations that can reach women and children before crisis escalates.

Funding grassroots organisations is not duplication. It is investment in the social infrastructure that makes prevention, early intervention, recovery and system navigation possible.

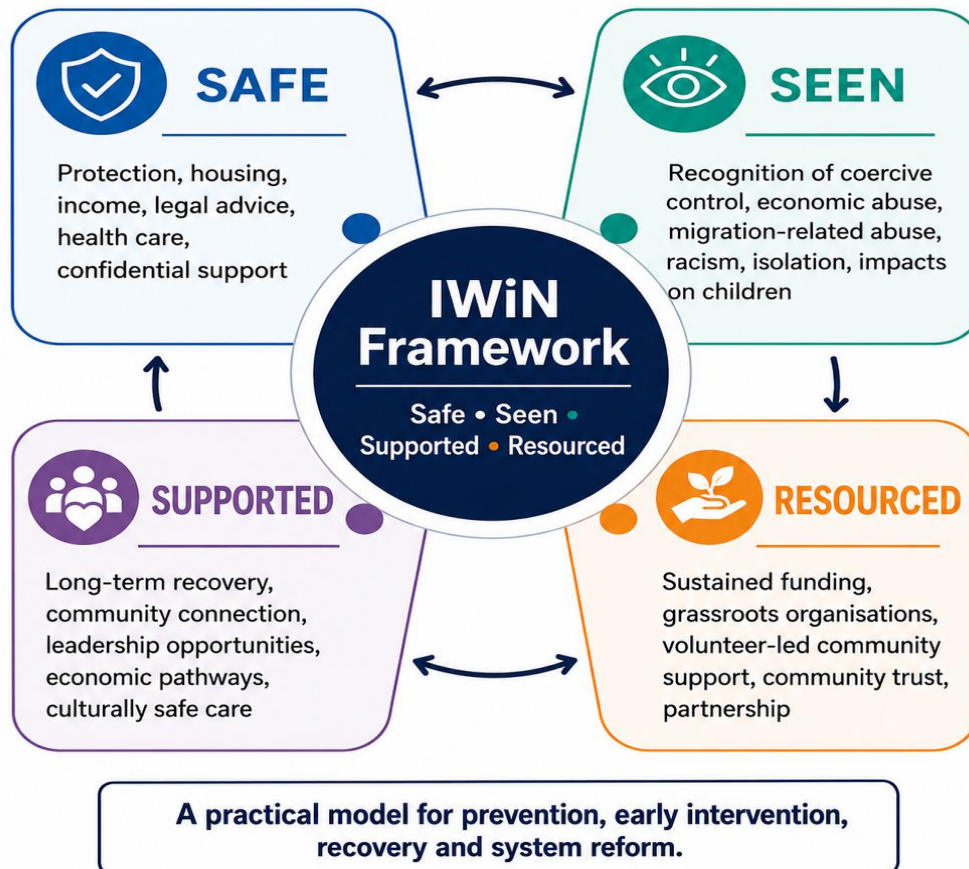
3. IWIn’s Proposed Framework: *Safe, Seen, Supported and Resourced*

IWIn proposes the *Safe, Seen, Supported and Resourced* framework as a practical model for strengthening culturally responsive family violence prevention, early intervention, recovery and system reform for multicultural women and children.

The framework recognises that women and children affected by family, domestic and sexual violence need more than crisis response. They need a system that protects them, recognises their full experience, supports their long-term recovery, and resources the trusted grassroots organisations that help them access safety.

Figure 1: IWiN's **Safe, Seen, Supported and Resourced** Framework

IWiN's Proposed Framework: Safe, Seen, Supported and Resourced



Safe means that women and children can access protection, housing, income, legal advice, health care and confidential support without fear, shame, racism, language barriers or system complexity. Safety must be practical, accessible and culturally responsive.

Seen means that the system must recognise the full reality of violence experienced by multicultural women and children. This includes coercive control, economic abuse, migration-related abuse, technology-facilitated abuse, racism, social isolation, community pressure and the impacts of violence on children.

Supported means that women and children are not left alone after crisis. They need long-term recovery pathways that include mental health support, community connection, leadership opportunities, economic pathways, social inclusion and culturally safe care.

Resourced means that the grassroots organisations already trusted by multicultural women and families must be properly funded and integrated into the family violence response system. Volunteer-led organisations often provide first contact, advocacy, food



support, referrals, peer support, education and community connection, yet they remain underfunded and structurally excluded from mainstream funding models.

Together, these four elements show that ending violence against women and children requires an integrated approach. A woman must be *Safe to seek help, Seen in her full lived experience, Supported beyond crisis, and connected to organisations that are properly Resourced to walk beside her.* For multicultural communities, this framework provides a practical pathway from hidden violence to safety, recovery, agency and system accountability.

4. Evidence Base Supporting the Framework

IWiN's *Safe, Seen, Supported and Resourced* framework is grounded in national evidence on the scale of violence against women and children, the barriers faced by multicultural communities, the importance of community-led responses, and the social value of volunteer-led organisations.

First, family, domestic and sexual violence remains a large-scale national issue. Australian Government data shows that 1 in 4 women have experienced violence by an intimate partner since the age of 15, and 1 in 5 women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. These figures highlight the urgency of prevention, early intervention and recovery responses that reach women before violence escalates.

Second, multicultural, migrant and refugee women face distinct and additional barriers to safety. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare recognises that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may experience increased exposure to risk factors or heightened barriers to seeking support. ANROWS also identifies that immigrant and refugee women face barriers accessing services aimed at preventing and responding to domestic and family violence, and that local, community-based interventions are needed.

Third, children and young people must be recognised in their own right. Violence against women and children cannot be addressed only through adult crisis response. Children may experience violence directly, witness violence, carry trauma, act as interpreters for parents, or be affected by housing, income, legal and family separation issues. For children and young people from migrant and refugee families, these experiences can be compounded by racism, settlement pressures, language barriers and intergenerational stress.

Fourth, community-led responses are essential. Evidence from ANROWS' ASPIRE project supports the importance of community-led responses to violence against immigrant and refugee women. This is consistent with IWIn's experience: women who do not report violence or approach mainstream services may first disclose fear, control, isolation or financial stress through trusted community spaces.

Finally, volunteer-led organisations represent significant social infrastructure. VolunteeringACT's State of Volunteering in the ACT 2024 found that 279,000 ACT residents contributed over 63 million hours of volunteering in 2023, generating \$14.1 billion of value for the Canberra Region. This demonstrates that volunteer-led



organisations are not peripheral to social policy; they are a major source of social and economic value.

Together, this evidence supports IWiN's central argument: *the Second Action Plan must fund the grassroots, prevent violence before crisis, build trusted pathways to safety, and make recovery real for multicultural women and children.*

5. How the Framework Works and the Role of Volunteer-Led Grassroots Multicultural Organisations

IWiN's *Safe, Seen, Supported and Resourced* framework works as a practical pathway for reaching multicultural women and children who are often missed by formal family violence systems.

The framework begins with the reality that many women and children affected by family, domestic and sexual violence do not enter the service system through formal reporting. They may not contact police, crisis services or government agencies. They may first disclose fear, control, isolation, financial stress or family pressure in trusted community spaces. For multicultural women, this may happen through a women's network, community event, leadership program, peer conversation, food support activity, youth program, cultural gathering or trusted volunteer.

This is where volunteer-led grassroots multicultural organisations play a critical role. They are often the first safe bridge between hidden violence and formal support.

The framework works through four connected elements.

Safe is the first requirement. Women and children need practical access to protection, housing, income, legal advice, health care, mental health support and confidential information. Volunteer-led grassroots multicultural organisations help create this first layer of safety by providing trusted listening, culturally safe information, early identification of risk, practical support and warm referrals to specialist services.

Seen means that women and children are recognised in their full lived experience. For multicultural women, violence may include coercive control, financial abuse, migration-related abuse, technology-facilitated abuse, racism, social isolation, community pressure and fear of visa, housing or child protection consequences. Grassroots multicultural organisations help make these hidden experiences visible because they understand community context, language barriers, family dynamics and the reasons women may not report violence.

Supported means that women and children are not left alone after the first disclosure or crisis response. Recovery requires time, trust and continuity. Volunteer-led grassroots multicultural organisations support recovery by reducing isolation, maintaining connection, providing peer support, building confidence, creating leadership opportunities, supporting social inclusion and linking women with economic pathways.

Resourced is the foundation that makes the other three elements possible. Grassroots organisations cannot continue to provide trusted community support, prevention, early intervention and recovery work without proper funding, training, safeguarding,



governance support and fair partnerships. Resourcing these organisations is not an optional add-on; it is essential to reaching the women and children the system currently misses.

In this framework, volunteer-led grassroots multicultural organisations are not replacing specialist family violence services. Their role is different but equally important. They act as trusted connectors, early warning points, cultural interpreters, advocates, prevention partners and recovery supports. They help women and children move from silence to safety, from isolation to connection, and from crisis to long-term recovery.

The framework therefore shows that an effective family violence system must work in partnership with the community infrastructure women already trust. *A woman must be Safe enough to seek help, Seen in the full reality of her experience, Supported beyond crisis, and connected to organisations that are properly Resourced to walk beside her.*

6. Why Grassroots Multicultural Organisations Matter

Family violence is often hidden in multicultural, migrant and refugee communities because of complex and overlapping barriers. These may include language barriers, migration status, visa dependence, financial abuse, fear of authorities, social isolation, racism, lack of transport, lack of knowledge of rights, stigma, community pressure, fear of family separation, and concern about children.

Many women do not report violence. Many do not seek help from mainstream services. Some may only disclose their experiences indirectly, slowly or in trusted informal settings. This means that formal services may only see a small part of the problem.

Volunteer-led grassroots multicultural organisations are often closest to the women and children the system misses. They are trusted because they are embedded in community life. They understand cultural context, migration journeys, family expectations, social pressures and the practical barriers women face. They often provide the first layer of support: listening, information, advocacy, food support, emotional support, referral, interpretation assistance, transport help, social connection, community education and practical problem-solving.

Volunteer-led organisations also carry significant social and economic value. The State of Volunteering in the ACT 2024 reports that 279,000 ACT residents contributed over 63 million hours of volunteering in 2023, generating \$14.1 billion of value for the Canberra Region. The report also identifies a benefit-cost ratio of 5.4:1, meaning that every \$1 invested in volunteering returns \$5.40 in value.

This evidence shows that volunteering is not marginal or informal goodwill. It is essential social infrastructure. Yet many volunteer-led organisations are expected to carry complex community needs without sustainable funding, paid staff, safeguarding support, evaluation resources or administrative capacity.

If the Second Action Plan is serious about prevention and early intervention, it must invest in the organisations that already reach women and children before they enter formal crisis systems.



7. Priority 2: Prevention and Early Intervention

IWiN recommends that prevention and early intervention be a central focus of the Second Action Plan. Family violence prevention cannot rely only on broad public campaigns or formal service systems. It must also happen through trusted community relationships, culturally safe conversations, peer networks, leadership programs, economic empowerment, rights education and social inclusion.

For many multicultural women, the early warning signs of violence may be hidden or normalised. Emotional abuse, coercive control, financial control, isolation, surveillance, migration-related threats, dowry-related demands, family pressure and technology-facilitated abuse may not be immediately recognised as family violence. Women may remain silent because they fear judgement, disbelief, retaliation, homelessness, visa consequences or community exclusion.

Prevention must therefore be delivered in ways that are accessible, culturally relevant and trusted. This requires more than translated brochures. It requires community-led education, multilingual conversations, peer support, storytelling, women's leadership, youth engagement, and safe spaces where women can build confidence and knowledge without stigma.

IWiN's work demonstrates this approach. NETRI supports women and girls from multicultural backgrounds to build leadership, confidence, communication skills, networks and civic participation. The ORANGE Skirt Social Enterprise Project creates economic pathways for women, recognising that financial independence is central to safety and recovery. WOMEN UNBOUND magazine amplifies women's voices and creates a platform for expression, reflection, healing and public participation. YUVA supports young people to develop leadership in human rights, equality, social cohesion and respectful communities.

These programs contribute to prevention by strengthening protective factors. They reduce isolation. They increase confidence. They build knowledge of rights. They create trusted networks. They help women and young people find voice, leadership and opportunity. They support economic and social participation. They create culturally safe spaces where difficult issues can be discussed before they become crises.

IWiN recommends that the Second Action Plan fund community-led prevention models that include culturally safe rights education, coercive control awareness, financial abuse and economic security education, respectful relationships education, mental health and wellbeing support, peer networks and women's circles, leadership programs for multicultural women and girls, youth leadership programs, community storytelling and publications, social enterprise and employment pathways, trusted referral networks and community-led advocacy.

Prevention must not be limited to awareness. Prevention must build power, safety, knowledge, confidence and options.



8. Priority 5: System Integration and Workforce

The current system is fragmented and difficult to navigate. A woman experiencing violence may need to deal with police, courts, housing, Centrelink, immigration, health services, mental health providers, child protection, schools, banks, legal services, family violence services and community organisations at the same time. This is overwhelming for any victim-survivor. It is even more difficult for women with limited English, limited income, trauma, children, visa insecurity or no family support in Australia.

Grassroots organisations often perform system navigation informally. They explain services, help women make calls, connect women with trusted contacts, provide emotional support, assist with forms, help with transport, advocate with agencies, and encourage women to seek help. However, this work is rarely funded properly. It is often invisible in formal service models.

IWiN recommends the development of a national multicultural family violence navigator model, delivered in partnership with grassroots organisations and specialist services. Navigators should be trained in trauma-informed practice, cultural safety, family violence risk, coercive control, interpreter use, confidentiality, migration-related abuse, financial abuse, housing pathways and referral systems.

System integration must also mean funding integration. Too often, large organisations are funded to deliver services to multicultural communities, while grassroots organisations are asked to provide community access, consultation, promotion, translation, lived experience and trust without equivalent resourcing. This is not equitable partnership.

The Second Action Plan should require funded services to partner fairly with grassroots organisations and allocate resources to them when they are expected to provide community engagement, referral, co-design, translation, lived experience input or cultural expertise.

Workforce development must also go beyond cultural awareness. Mainstream and specialist services need practical training in cultural safety, safe enquiry, coercive control in diverse family contexts, migration-related abuse, economic abuse, dowry-related abuse, use of qualified interpreters, confidentiality in small communities, racism and service access, trauma-informed practice, avoiding victim-blaming, warm referrals and community partnership.

Workforce diversity is also essential. Multicultural women with lived expertise and community leadership experience should be supported into paid roles in prevention, early intervention, advocacy, recovery, research, evaluation and policy design.

9. Priority 1: Victim-Survivors

IWiN supports stronger whole-of-system support, healing and recovery for victim-survivors. However, many multicultural victim-survivors are not visible to formal systems. They may not report violence or seek help until harm has escalated. Some may not seek formal support at all.

The Second Action Plan should recognise that access is not only about whether services exist. Access also depends on whether women know about the service, trust the service,



can communicate safely with the service, can access interpreters, feel culturally respected, understand their rights, have transport, have childcare, and believe that seeking help will not create further harm.

For many women, the journey to safety begins with informal disclosure in a trusted setting. This may occur during a community program, women's event, leadership workshop, social gathering, food support activity, magazine contribution, youth program or peer conversation. These spaces should be recognised as part of the broader safety ecosystem.

The Second Action Plan should strengthen long-term recovery support. Leaving violence is not the end of the journey. Women need housing, income, employment pathways, childcare, legal assistance, mental health support, social connection, community belonging and time to rebuild confidence.

IWiN recommends a multicultural victim-survivor recovery pathway that connects safety planning with legal support, financial literacy, employment readiness, mental health care, housing, peer support, community connection and leadership opportunities.

10. Priority 3: Children and Young People in Their Own Right

IWiN welcomes the recognition of children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right. Children and young people from migrant and refugee families can experience family violence directly and indirectly, while also navigating racism, settlement stress, intergenerational conflict, cultural expectations and language responsibilities.

Some children may act as interpreters for parents or help adults navigate systems. Some may carry fear, shame or confusion in silence. Young people may also be exposed to online misogyny, coercive behaviour in relationships, digital surveillance, image-based abuse and harmful peer norms.

The Second Action Plan should support culturally tailored youth prevention programs that engage young people in conversations about consent, gender equality, coercive control, online safety, racism, family expectations, respectful relationships, bystander action and help-seeking.

IWiN's YUVA program provides a useful model for youth leadership in human rights, social cohesion, equality and community responsibility. Young people should not be seen only as people at risk. They should also be supported as leaders and peer educators in preventing violence.

11. Priority 4: People Who Use Violence

IWiN supports stronger accountability and earlier intervention for people who use violence. Culture must never be used to excuse violence. At the same time, interventions must be culturally informed to be effective.

Programs working with men and boys from multicultural communities should address coercive control, emotional abuse, financial abuse, parenting without violence, respectful relationships, digital abuse, consent, shared responsibility at home and the legal consequences of violence.



Community leaders, male allies, youth groups, cultural organisations and settlement services can help challenge harmful attitudes, but this work must be properly supported and connected to specialist family violence expertise. Victim-survivor safety must remain central.

IWiN does not position itself as a specialist perpetrator intervention service. However, IWiN supports culturally informed prevention work with families, young people and communities to challenge the gender norms, silence and stigma that allow violence to continue.

12. The Missing Piece: Dedicated Funding for Grassroots Organisations

IWiN strongly recommends that the Second Action Plan directly address structural funding inequity faced by small grassroots community organisations.

The current funding system often favours large and medium-sized not-for-profit organisations. These organisations usually have paid staff, compliance systems, financial infrastructure, grant writers and established relationships with funders. Small grassroots organisations, particularly those led by multicultural women, often do not have these resources.

This creates a serious policy gap. The organisations with the deepest reach into marginalised communities are often the least resourced. They are closest to women who do not report violence, do not access mainstream services and do not appear in official data. Yet these organisations are frequently treated as informal connectors rather than funded partners.

Volunteer-led grassroots organisations contribute to family violence prevention and response through education, advocacy, counselling or informal emotional support, food support, emergency assistance, social connection, translation and interpretation assistance, transport help, leadership development, referral support and culturally safe spaces. They often respond outside business hours, in crisis moments and through trusted relationships built over many years.

This contribution should no longer be invisible or unfunded. If Australia is serious about ending violence against women and children in one generation, it must fund the community infrastructure that reaches women before, during and after crisis.

IWiN recommends establishing a separate national or jurisdictional body, fund or commissioning mechanism for grassroots, volunteer-led and community-led organisations working with women, children and families affected by family and domestic violence, gender inequality and related health, mental health, social and economic impacts.

This mechanism should provide substantial, flexible and multi-year funding; use simplified and accessible application processes; recognise volunteer labour and community trust as evidence of capability; fund prevention, early intervention, recovery and community education, not only crisis response; support small organisations with governance, safeguarding, evaluation and reporting capacity; allow partnerships with specialist services without requiring grassroots organisations to be absorbed by larger



providers; include multicultural women's organisations in decision-making; fund lived-experience-led and community-led program design; recognise advocacy and community education as legitimate funded activities; and measure outcomes through both quantitative and qualitative evidence.

A separate mechanism is needed because marginalised women and children often do not reach formal systems until violence has escalated. Grassroots organisations are often the bridge between silence and support. Without resourcing these organisations, national policy will continue to miss the women and children who are least visible but most in need of culturally safe support.

13. Economic Security as Prevention and Recovery

Economic security must be treated as a core pillar of the Second Action Plan. Financial dependence is one of the major reasons women remain in unsafe relationships or return to them. Economic abuse can include control of income, debt, restriction of work or study, misuse of joint accounts, sabotage of employment, control of benefits, dowry-related demands, forced remittances and threats linked to visa or sponsorship status.

For multicultural women, economic insecurity may be compounded by non-recognition of overseas qualifications, lack of Australian work experience, limited English, lack of childcare, racism in employment, trauma, isolation and lack of confidence after violence.

The Second Action Plan should link family violence prevention and recovery with employment support, financial literacy, small business pathways, social enterprise, recognition of overseas skills, childcare access and flexible training.

IWiN's ORANGE Skirt Social Enterprise Project is an example of how economic empowerment can be connected to safety, dignity, confidence and recovery.

14. Data, Evidence and Accountability

The Second Action Plan should improve data collection and evaluation on how policies and services are working for multicultural, migrant and refugee women and children. Many women do not report family violence, and many forms of abuse are under-recognised in mainstream data. This includes coercive control, migration-related abuse, economic abuse, dowry-related abuse, technology-facilitated abuse, racism, community pressure and informal help-seeking.

Evaluation should include lived experience, community-led research, qualitative evidence and practice-based knowledge from grassroots organisations. It should also measure whether funding is reaching the organisations that are closest to marginalised women and children.

Suggested indicators include access to culturally safe support, availability of multilingual information, use of qualified interpreters, support for women on temporary visas, access to housing, income, legal and mental health support, investment in grassroots organisations, workforce diversity, community-led prevention outcomes, victim-survivor trust and satisfaction, reduction in repeated storytelling, and long-term recovery and economic security.



Data and evaluation should not only measure service usage. If many multicultural women and children do not access formal services, then service data alone will underestimate need. The Second Action Plan should therefore include community-led evidence, lived experience and qualitative data to understand hidden barriers and missed populations.

15. Concluding Remarks

IWiN welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Second Action Plan. This is a critical opportunity to move from awareness to action, from crisis response to prevention, and from generic inclusion to genuine equity.

For multicultural women and children, safety is not only the absence of violence. Safety means having rights, income, housing, language access, trusted support, community connection, legal protection, confidence and choice. It means being able to leave violence without losing everything. It means children being recognised and supported. It means services understanding the realities of culture, migration, racism, trauma and economic dependence. It means women being heard not only as victim-survivors, but as leaders, advocates and agents of change.

The Second Action Plan must also recognise that grassroots volunteer-led organisations are essential social justice infrastructure and establish an effective mechanism to include them in co-designing the policies and programs to prevent violence against women and children. These organisations are often the first to hear hidden stories of violence, the first to provide support, and the first to build trust with women who may never approach mainstream services. Yet they remain underfunded, overstretched and structurally disadvantaged by current funding systems.

IWiN urges the Australian Government to establish a substantial and dedicated mechanism to fund volunteer-led grassroots multicultural organisations working with women, children and families experiencing family and domestic violence, gender inequality and related health, mental health, social and economic impacts.

Ending violence against women and children in one generation will only be possible if the women and children facing the greatest barriers are not left at the margins of policy, and if the organisations closest to them are no longer left at the margins of funding.

IWiN stands ready to contribute its community knowledge, advocacy experience, research-informed practice and trusted relationships to support implementation of the Second Action Plan.

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