



Muslim Women Australia

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Muslim Women Australia (MWA)

Submission on
Second Action Plan (2027–2032) under the
National Plan to End Violence Against Women
and Children 2022–2032

JULY 2026

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This submission has been prepared by Muslim Women Australia (MWA) and has been endorsed by the following organisations:

1. *Allawaw Aboriginal Corporation*
2. *Faith Housing Australia*
3. *Immigrant Women's Speakout*
4. *Older Womens Network NSW*
5. *Women and Girls Emergency Centre*

1. Introduction

Muslim Women Australia (MWA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Second Action Plan (2027–2032) under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032.

At MWA, we walk alongside women, children and families at some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. Through our integrated work across Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS), community housing, domestic and family violence responses, children and young people's programs, settlement services, and culturally responsive complex case management, we see both the impact of violence and the transformative power of the right support at the right time.

MWA's work cuts across all three workforce categories identified in the consultation paper. We are part of the specialist workforce and operate five shelters in New South Wales. We are also a settlement service provider and have developed and delivered a suite of prevention initiatives supporting girls, boys and men through community led approaches that strengthen safety, wellbeing and respectful relationships.

Our submission reflects more than four decades of community engagement and is grounded in lived experience, culturally responsive practice, faith informed and trauma informed care, and integrated service delivery.

The Second Action Plan presents a critical opportunity to move beyond fragmented responses and invest in long-term, community led and culturally grounded solutions that prevent violence before it begins, support healing after harm, and strengthen safety, dignity and hope for women, children, families and communities.

2. MWA's Overall Position

MWA supports a coordinated national approach where primary prevention is embedded across prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing through strategic and targeted action across the specialist, prevention and generalist workforces. Prevention is not an abstract goal. It must be experienced and applied across all communities, including migrant, refugee, multicultural, faith based, and racially marginalised communities.

From more than 40 years of practice, MWA's experience is that fragmented responses do not prevent violence. Relationships, trust, continuity of care, culturally safe pathways and sustained community partnerships do.

MWA believes that:

- Prevention requires long-term, sustained investment rather than short funding cycles.
- Effective responses must be community led, culturally grounded, trauma informed, faith sensitive and intersectional.
- Policy and funding must recognise that gender based violence is shaped by overlapping factors including culture, migration, racism, discrimination, faith, housing insecurity, trauma and family and community structures.
- Government should work in formal partnership with culturally specific organisations across the specialist, prevention and generalist workforces.

3. Context and Rationale

Nearly half of all Australians have at least one parent born overseas, and NSW is home to a deeply multicultural population. For victim survivors from migrant and refugee backgrounds,

gender inequality and sexism intersect with racism, discrimination, migration related barriers, language barriers, visa insecurity, housing pressures and distrust of institutions.

These systemic inequalities can create barriers to help seeking, reporting and healing. People who use violence may exploit these barriers to increase risk, reduce a victim survivor's choices and isolate women and children from support.

For many Muslim women and women from multicultural communities, gender inequality intersects with racism, discrimination, migration related barriers and broader social narratives. The intersection of racism, patriarchy and imperialism can create a "double bind" where women may feel reluctant to speak out about violence within their communities for fear of reinforcing racist stereotypes or contributing to discrimination against their communities.

In the context of domestic and family violence, where the consequences can be severe and life threatening, structural racism must be recognised and addressed as part of effective prevention and response strategies. Anti-racism and human rights frameworks should intersect with safety frameworks to acknowledge how anti-immigration rhetoric, exclusion and discrimination can affect help seeking, trust in institutions and pathways to healing. These dynamics are reflected across lived experience, community consultation and sector evidence. Reports of increased Islamophobia across Australia further reinforce the need for culturally safe, anti-racist approaches within the National Plan.

Access to safe and affordable housing remains one of the greatest barriers to safety, recovery and long-term stability for victim survivors. Housing pressures in NSW are particularly acute and can force women and children into unsafe choices, including returning to a person who uses violence, couch surfing, overcrowded living arrangements, inappropriate accommodation or entrenched poverty. While more women are seeking support earlier, help seeking must be matched with culturally safe housing pathways, integrated responses and wraparound support. The Second Action Plan should recognise women's shelters and refuges as critical components of the specialist workforce and ensure that investment in housing

infrastructure is accompanied by funding for complex case management, recovery supports and ongoing service delivery.

The focus should not become trapped in terminology alone. Whether the language used is multicultural, CALD, CARM, migrant and refugee, women of colour, people of colour, or diaspora communities, the rightful focus must remain on the needs, safety, healing and dignity of women and children across life stages; and the prevention of harm through meaningful engagement with families, communities, men and boys.

4. Priority Policy and Funding Recommendations

Drawing on more than four decades of community-based practice, MWA proposes the following practical actions that align with the National Plan priorities and build on approaches already demonstrating positive outcomes across multicultural communities.

1. Establish targeted multicultural actions.
2. Fund culturally specific organisations.
3. Invest in integrated housing and support.
4. Scale early intervention.
5. Build the culturally responsive workforce.
6. Engage men and boys safely.
7. Strengthen anti-racism and anti-vilification responses.
8. Protect soft-entry pathways and survivor choice.

5. What is Working: Insights from MWA Practice

Integrated Service Delivery

MWA's model combines housing, safety and wraparound support, enabling women to move from crisis to stability with dignity. This reflects the need for coordinated responses across the service continuum.

Community Led and Culturally Safe Practice

MWA services are designed and delivered through culturally competent, multilingual and community connected practice, grounded in trauma informed and faith sensitive approaches.

Lived Experience as Insight

MWA continues to strengthen the integration of client voice, reflection and storytelling into service design, recognising that prevention must be informed by the women and children most affected by violence.

Early Intervention Through Families and Children

MWA's children and young people's work demonstrates the importance of early, family-centred intervention in breaking cycles of violence and supporting behavioural, emotional and relational wellbeing.

Soft Entry and Trust Building Pathways

Women and families often need safe, non-stigmatising entry points before they are ready to disclose violence or engage with formal systems. Community trust is a prevention asset.

6. Key Gaps and Challenges

- Short-term funding cycles undermine long-term prevention outcomes and community trust.
- Limited investment in culturally specific organisations continues despite their critical role in trusted pathways and prevention.
- One-size-fits-all service models do not reflect diverse family, cultural, faith and community realities.
- Workforce sustainability remains a pressure, particularly for culturally competent, trauma-informed and faith-sensitive roles.
- Legal, criminal justice and service pathways can be complex, lengthy and siloed, reducing agency and choice for victim-survivors.
- Racism, vilification and Islamophobia can reduce public safety, help-seeking, participation and trust in institutions.

- Lack of safe, affordable and appropriate housing continues to undermine safety, recovery and long-term prevention outcomes for women and children experiencing violence.
- Capital investment in housing infrastructure is often not matched by investment in wraparound support, recovery services and complex case management.
- Funding approaches do not adequately recognise the distinct housing pressures, cost-of-living challenges and multicultural service demands experienced in NSW.

7. Responses to the Five Priority Areas

Priority Area 1: Victim-Survivors

MWA supports a victim-survivor-centred approach that also recognises victim-survivors as partners in shaping prevention, policy and service design.

- Embed lived experience voices across policy, program design and evaluation.
- Invest in culturally safe pathways for migrant, refugee, multicultural and faith communities.
- Strengthen holistic responses that integrate housing, safety, healing, casework and recovery.
- Ensure survivor choice and agency through multiple safe pathways, including soft-entry community-based supports and complementary pathways to criminal justice and legal responses.

Priority Area 2: Prevention and Early Intervention

- Invest long term in community-led, culturally grounded prevention models.
- Scale early intervention approaches tailored to migrant and refugee families.
- Support organisations already working within trusted community relationships.
- Address racism, discrimination and vilification as part of prevention.

Priority Area 3: Children and Young People

- Expand culturally appropriate parenting and family support programs.
- Invest in youth engagement within diverse communities.
- Invest in youth engagement in mainstream public and alternative educational settings, including independent schools and homeschooling networks.

- Strengthen linkages between children’s services and family violence responses.
- Recognise intergenerational healing, family systems and community belonging as protective factors.

Priority Area 4: People Who Use Violence

- Develop culturally responsive engagement programs for men and boys.
- Partner with community organisations to deliver interventions that are locally trusted and relevant.
- Invest in workforce capacity and safety frameworks to support this work.
- Build on community-led models such as MWA’s Saving FACE Project.

Priority Area 5: Integration, Workforce and Accountability

- Invest in a culturally competent, trauma-informed and faith-sensitive workforce.
- Support integrated delivery models that connect housing, support, recovery and prevention.
- Strengthen national coordination, monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- Ensure culturally specific organisations are formal implementation partners, not only consultation stakeholders.
- Review per-capita funding approaches to better recognise NSW’s distinct housing pressures, cost-of-living challenges and multicultural service needs.
- Better utilise National Partnership Agreements to support targeted investment in women’s refuges and culturally responsive specialist services.
- Ensure investment is appropriately distributed across specialist, prevention and generalist workforce streams.
- Recognise that services delivering supported accommodation and complex case management require dedicated and sustained investment.
- Recognise the opportunities, scope and limitations of each workforce category and establish clear parameters, accountability mechanisms and targeted measures to improve service effectiveness and confidence in help-seeking pathways.
- Acknowledge the limited capacity of frontline specialist services to undertake sustained policy advocacy while simultaneously managing evolving safety risks and complex support needs for victim-survivors.

8. Cross-Cutting Priorities for Implementation

MWA recommends that implementation of the Second Action Plan explicitly recognise:

- Collectivist and intergenerational approaches.
- Faith, culture and community as protective factors.
- Anti-racism and anti-vilification.
- Housing as prevention and recovery infrastructure.
- Soft-entry and complementary pathways.
- Sustained investment and accountability.

9. Consolidated Recommendations

1. Create targeted multicultural actions under every Priority Area or establish a standalone multicultural action plan connected to the Second Action Plan.
2. Fund culturally specific organisations as core prevention, early intervention, response and recovery partners through dedicated, long-term funding streams.
3. Recognise integrated housing and support models as essential prevention, response and recovery infrastructure.
4. Invest in safe and affordable housing pathways that combine accommodation, wraparound support, recovery services and complex case management.
5. Recognise women's refuges and shelters as critical components of the specialist workforce and ensure they receive dedicated and sustainable investment.
6. Invest in early intervention for migrant and refugee families, including children and young people.
7. Build a national culturally responsive workforce framework across specialist, prevention and generalist settings.
8. Review funding allocation approaches to ensure they adequately reflect regional housing pressures, cost-of-living challenges, population diversity and service demand.
9. Better utilise National Partnership Agreements to strengthen investment in culturally responsive specialist services and women's refuges.
10. Establish clearer investment, accountability and evaluation mechanisms across specialist, prevention and generalist workforce streams.
11. Fund community-led engagement with men and boys in culturally safe, faith-sensitive and locally trusted ways.

12. Embed anti-racism, anti-vilification, anti-discrimination and anti-Islamophobia measures as core safety, prevention and participation priorities.
13. Recognise structural racism and discrimination as factors influencing safety, participation, trust in institutions and help-seeking behaviours.
14. Protect soft-entry pathways and survivor choice so women and children can access support through trusted, non-stigmatising and complementary routes.
15. Ensure culturally specific organisations are recognised as formal implementation partners in the National Plan, rather than consultation stakeholders alone.

10. Conclusion

At MWA, we witness both the pain caused by violence and the strength of women, children and families who, with the right support, rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

The Second Action Plan offers an opportunity to move beyond fragmented responses and invest in long-term, community-led, culturally grounded and trauma-informed solutions that prevent violence before it begins and support healing after harm.

MWA calls on the Commonwealth to ensure that no woman or child is left behind because of culture, faith, language, migration journey, race or background. Prevention will only be strengthened when investment, inclusion and genuine partnership with communities are embedded into the national response, with targeted investment and actions across the entire service continuum.

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Second Action Plan (2027–2032) Submission**

