



AUSTRALIAN MUSLIM WOMEN'S CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
Equality without Exception

Submission
to
Royal Commission into Family Violence

May 2015

This submission has been developed by the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR). The AMWCHR is an organisation of Muslim women working to advance the rights and status of Muslim women in Australia. This submission is based on 23 years of experience providing one to one support to Muslim women and children experiencing violence, undertaking community education campaigns to raise awareness and shift attitudes within Muslim communities conducive to violence in the home, and work to increase the community, legal and government capacity to recognise and respond to the needs of Muslim women. The submission is designed to increase the Inquiry's understanding of the unique experience of Muslim women, which has ultimately rendered 'invisible' the violence targeting Muslim women in the home, by both the service sector and all levels of government. Muslim women are also 'invisible' in the current literature and research on violence against Muslim women. This submission looks at three basic questions: Why a submission on Muslim Women?, How has violence against Muslim Women Been Addressed? How Should violence Against Muslim Women Be Addressed?

Contents

About Us

1. Why a submission on Muslim Women?
2. How has violence against Muslim women been addressed?
3. How should violence against Muslim women be addressed?

Appendix

References

About Us

Introduction

The AMWCHR is an organisation of Muslim women working to advance the rights and status of Muslim women in Australia.

We believe Muslim women must be the impetus for change in their status as citizens.

The Australian Muslim community is characterised by diversity and hybridity, and not by a binding vision of Islam or what it means to be Muslim. We are therefore a non-religious organisation reflecting the sectarian, cultural and linguistic diversity within the Muslim community.

As an organisation committed to Muslim women and human rights, we will intervene when Islam is used to undermine the status of Muslim women with facts and informed analysis.

Our framework of understanding is the international Muslim women's movement for equality and dignity but our action and concern is focused on the local communities in Australia where Muslim women live.

We work for the rights of Muslim women by:

- Empowering women's self-determination
- Bringing a human rights approach to bear on issues of inequality and disadvantage
- Working with individuals, the community, and government to advocate for equality within the Australian context

We aim to inspire positive action by others and aspire to continuously enhance the quality, impact and effectiveness of our work.

What are the core areas of work we undertake?

We prioritise practical assistance for women to improve their lives in tangible and measurable ways. We work with individuals, groups and service providers in the following areas:

- Case work, referrals, secondary consultation and outreach
- Advocacy

- Community-based programs and service delivery
- Capacity building
- Leadership development
- Policy development
- Partnership projects

We have recently established the Australian Institute for Minority Women (the Institute) to operate as the research and consultancy arm of AMWCHR. The experience of Muslim women as a minority has much in common with women's experiences from other minority groups. The Institute was created because, we believe, the expertise we formed working with Muslim women could be useful to all minority women. As well as providing an insight into the conditions and situations of minorities in Australia generally, the Institute seeks to build an alliance with other minority women in Australia as a gesture of solidarity. The Institute undertakes the following activities:

- Research
- Training development and delivery
- Publications
- Consultancy services

Background

In 1991 the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria (The Council) was established by Muslim women for Muslim women. The Council was founded on the belief that meaningful change to the status of Muslim women could be achieved through the improved situation of Muslim women individually and by building their collective capacity.

In December 2012, The Council's name was changed to the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR) to reflect the Council's significant role as a human rights defender. This change recognises the singularity of our voice and work on Muslim women's human rights across Australia.

As advocates of Muslim women's rights, we are in chorus with a multitude of Muslims all over the world supporting a vision of Islam at its most progressive, immediate and pertinent to the challenges Muslim women face. Our work in Australia contributes to the already substantial work on Muslim women's human rights taking place across the world in Muslim and non-Muslim majority countries.

How do we see the world?

For the most part, Muslim women who migrated to Australia did so as heirs of a rich, pluralistic tradition, but also as bearers of significant disadvantage, discrimination and, at times, violence. In the context of our history, Islam has been both a liberating and oppressive force in the lives of women, influenced by the vision and limitations of patriarchal society. Historicising how Islam was understood and brought to bear on the status of women testifies to the diversity and plurality of tradition and practice: there has not been one Islam in which all Muslims have participated, but a multiplicity of Islamic interpretations in which many people have lived.

The pursuit of justice and equality for Muslim women has been present to varying degrees in all historical periods and across all cultures and societies. While this pursuit has not always resulted in structural and institutional change, it has nonetheless featured as part of Muslim women's history. Today, all over the world, Muslim women are working and mobilising for change.

This global movement for parity is relevant to Australian Muslim women, whether immigrants or daughters of immigrants, because it brings us closer to the challenge of equality in our Australian context. We seek equality not only with Muslim men but with all Australian citizens.

How does our worldview influence our work?

We take a non-religious, non-sectarian approach to our work and adopt a social justice lens to Islam when it is used to justify any infringement against women. This allows us to work with all Muslim women. We believe that there is not one view of Islam that represents all Muslims in Australia and, further, that the diversity of Muslims in Australia is a strength.

1. Why a submission on Muslim Women?

Family violence affects people from all ethnicities, cultures and religions. In Australia, a woman is killed every week by her partner or ex-partner and 1 in 3 women have experienced physical or sexual abuse by someone known to them (White Ribbon 2014). While family violence is a universal problem, there are key emerging issues in Australian family violence research, particularly around vulnerable communities such as women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, the LGBTI community, women with disabilities and Indigenous Australians, as well as increased insights into the relationship between family violence and homelessness (see Bartels 2010; Tually et al 2008). Furthermore, there are unique challenges for women from *newly arrived* CALD (NACALD) communities, refugee and immigrant communities.

Muslim women are often conceptualised as being a sub-group of the CALD population. While Muslim women face many of the same challenges as CALD communities in their vulnerability to violence and challenges accessing services, this view fails to recognise key differences that are crucial to both the phenomena of family violence and efforts towards its eradication. In the experience of AMWCHR, for many Muslims, religious identity surpasses cultural identity, particularly in matters related to gender and family. The formation of religious identity in Muslim communities is characterised by its complexity and diversity. Currently there are thought to exist approximately 32 sects in Islam, although no accurate or reliable figures exist. Muslims herald from 83 countries globally, and formation of Muslim identity can differ profoundly depending on cultural background, class, gender, sexual orientation, level of education, country context and process of migration and settlement into Australia.

Australian Muslims, therefore, are a highly diverse group in their own right- 40 per cent of Muslims are Australian born and are third and fourth generation Australians. Within Muslim communities, there are at risk minorities or minorities within minorities. These include those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI), those experiencing homelessness and those who have a disability. These communities have received less consideration and no government or sector response to date.

The causes, nature and prevalence of family violence in Muslim families is significantly under-researched, and this substantially limits our ability to generalise as to the degree to which they share similarities with other at risk groups beyond the experience of our own work.

Muslim women experience challenges that are complex and intersectional, with religious identity playing a significant, at times, defining role in how women understand family violence and how services need to work towards its eradication. Generalised or generic approaches, which seek to work broadly with CALD communities, have no benefit for Muslim women. Further, recognition of structural impediments or unique challenges that face CALD communities only go part of the way in recognising factors which need to be addressed in tackling family violence for Muslim communities.

Barriers to Assistance

There is increasing acknowledgement of the challenges facing at risk groups (Pease & Rees 2007; Bartels 2010; Tually et al 2008). As an at-risk group, Muslim women and the issues they face require research and specific attention. Many Muslim women experience a complex intersection of the challenges, some of which are similar to those experienced by CALD women. These include:

Structural inequalities that contribute to their increased vulnerability including:

- Language barriers that can define every aspect and step of seeking service support and legal redress
- Socio-economic disadvantage (detailed below)
- Limited knowledge of rights and protections available in Australia
- Structural racism and intolerance both in experiences and apprehension when seeking support services and legal redress
- Insecure migration status and increasing number of migration legislation that is significantly limiting women's rights. For example, the provisions for spousal visa applicants to stay in Australia under the Family Violence provision once their relationship breakdown due to violence, limits rather than promotes women's right to escape violence.
- The rapid increase in anti-terrorism laws which are perceived as unnecessary and draconian by many Muslims. This has developed into apprehensiveness about the Australian legal system and a mistrust of both government and the legal system. This significantly impacts women's confidence in seeking protection from a system that they generally perceive to be targeting their community
- Cultural and gender mainstreaming of services has increasingly limited the number of services available to Muslim women, resulted in defunding of community organisations capable of providing programs to shift attitudes/values conducive to

violence against women and culturally homogenised the Victorian welfare sector's workforce

Muslim women accessing assistance face the following barriers:

- Lack of resources, workers and information (in print and online) in languages other than English
- Lack of resources for women who cannot read or write in any language
- Lack of culturally appropriate or sensitive response services
- Lack of culturally relevant and targeted prevention programs, leading to generic messaging to CALD communities which do not have resonance to any community
- Lack of access to appropriate early intervention and prevention programs
- Ongoing issues and challenges to appropriate interpretation and translation services to women

The above noted barriers contribute to the under representation of Muslim women in preventative services and their over representation in crisis services.

Muslim women who are newly arrived communities

2009 was marked by the highest intake of Muslims to Australia. However, Muslim women have always featured in Australia migration intake. While Muslims now migrate as skilled migrants, historically and today, the vast majority of Muslim women arrive on Family Stream Spouse visas, Humanitarian Stream 200 Refugee visas and 204 Woman at Risk visas. For these women, compounding factors include:

- Traumas associated with their country of origin including war, civil unrest, natural disaster or targeted political persecution because of gender, political affiliation, ethnic or sectarian identity.
- Trauma associated with process of migration, including method of arrival, periods in refugee camps and, potentially on arrival, experiences of detention
- Isolation and lack of support networks including loss of family and community
- For women who arrive on spousal visas, they may arrive to a hostile network of family members where abuse by the partner and his family may take place. This

can include either actively being violent or by preventing the woman from seeking assistance

- Settlement in Victoria's outer regions with limited access to services, including Mildura, Shepparton, Swan Hill and Geelong

Muslim women and socio-economic disadvantage

Socio-economic disadvantage is a further correlating factor with the occurrence of family violence (ABS 2013) as well as an inhibiting force for women seeking assistance. It is now known that the leading cause of homelessness is family violence (CHP 2013, 1; Homelessness Australia 2013, 2). The way this manifests includes:

- Accessing affordable housing when escaping domestic violence
- Escaping financial dependence on an abusive partner

Poverty and disadvantage can intersect with issues facing Muslim and minority women. While research into the economic status of Muslim women in Australia is scarce, we do know that Muslim women, and the communities they belong to, are overrepresented in several poverty indicators such as income, the work force participation rate and English proficiency. For instance:

- In 2006, 15.1 per cent of Muslim women were unemployed, which is three times the national average. And two thirds (63.3%) were not in the labour force (ABS 2006; Lovat et al 2011, 23).
- In 2011, 18.33% of Muslim women reported that they couldn't speak English well or at all. For Muslim women born overseas, the rates were much higher:
 - 31.19% of Lebanese-born Muslim women couldn't speak English well or at all
 - 38% of Turkish-born Muslim women couldn't speak English well or at all
 - 36.7% of Afghani-born Muslim women couldn't speak English well or at all¹
- According to Homelessness Australia, 'feedback from the homelessness sector has shown that women from CALD backgrounds are an emerging group in the

¹ Lebanon, Afghanistan and Turkey are the top three countries of origin for Muslim migration to Australia.

homelessness population, particularly in relation to domestic and family violence.’ (2013, 2).

- Housing service, Macauley House reports that in 2013-14 47% of clients came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Macauley House 2014).

Intersecting forms of violence against Muslim women

This section of our submission has seeks to detail the ways in which racial violence prevents women from seeking assistance for family violence, and the way in which racial violence is an equally binding narrative of Muslim women’s lives in Australia. Racial violence is also used by perpetrators and communities to dissuade women from seeking assistance in a country that is perceived and experienced as a ‘hostile and racist system’.

The AMWCHR has undertaken research on women’s experience of racial violence and religious vilification in (AMWCHR 2008) and is currently finalising additional research (which can be made available to the Commission) to explore a recent spike in reports of abuse. The following list, cites abuse and violence that has come to feature in the life of Muslim women in Victoria:

- daily forms of racism and incivility, such as being ridiculed and insulted;
- verbal abuse including intimidating and threatening behaviour;
- acts of discrimination; and
- physical violence, including having hijab removed and spitting in women’s faces .

From our research our findings included: the majority of incidents were in public spaces such as on the street, in parks, shopping centres and on public transport. They were usually perpetrated by people unknown to the victims. Almost half the participants believed that work opportunities were significantly limited because of their religion or because they wore the hijab. Women were particularly concerned for the welfare of their daughters, believing that discrimination would significantly limit their daughters’ educational and work opportunities.

In 2010, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted with concern reports from Australia that highlighted “ongoing issues of discrimination and inequity...experienced by members of certain minority communities including African communities, people of Asian, Middle Eastern and Muslim backgrounds, and in particular Muslim women’ (United Nations, 2010, 3). As such, it is essential that the challenges facing Muslim women are, on the one hand, acknowledged within the wider understanding of minority disadvantage, and on the other, acknowledged as unique to Muslim women living in the context of discrimination, racial violence and religious vilification.

Stereotyping, sensationalising and the media

Despite Muslim women's unrelenting over-representation in the media as victims of Muslim men's violence², government policy and research initiatives continue to treat Muslim communities as one group among the many CALD communities residing in Australia. On one hand violence against cultural and media representation of violence against Muslim women grossly over represents the level of family violence Muslim women experience, on the other hand, government policy and funding imply family violence in Muslim communities is non-existent.

It should be noted however, that Muslim women as "victims" and Muslim men as "violent perpetrators", are two stereotypes that play powerfully into how the community sector responds and perceives the Muslim community.

The role of Islam in family violence

The relationship between Islam and family violence must be considered both as a potentially contributory factor in men's justification of violence towards women, and as a powerful and effective framework towards its eradication.

The status of women has been one of the most controversial issues in the interpretative battles that have taken place over the meaning of Islam and its sacred text, the holy Qur'an. Among Muslims, the interpretations and application of Islamic doctrine in relation to women varies considerably, and given the diversity of Muslims globally, there is a lack consensus as to the status of women, and this has direct impact on their treatment, in Islam.

Orthodox interpretative frameworks allocate women an inferior status to men, and this directly affects marital and family relationships, rendering women vulnerable to violence and abuse. Other traditions employ interpretative frameworks that designate women equal status to men, and specifically promote an interpretative framework in which Islam carries a strong anti-violence message. There are also, of course, a multitude of Muslim traditions and frameworks between these two approaches.

Like most religions, the definition of Islam and the status of women have varied considerably historically and continue to be subject to political, social and economic change. Because of this, it is important to establish the specific geographic and sectarian contexts of women's situation and oppression rather than referring generally to them as "Islamic".

² See El Matrah, at < <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-10-29/el-matrah-misrepresenting-migrant-violence/4337940>> and < http://www.crikey.com.au/2012/04/05/forced-marriage-muslim-women-treated-like-entertainment-fodder/?wmpmp_switcher=mobile>.

What may be considered Islamic in one Muslim context may be totally unheard of in another.

Globally, Muslims in both Muslim majority contexts and in contexts where they are a minority, are increasingly responding to family violence through education campaigns, service provision and legal reform. In fact, in some Muslim majority contexts, more support is available to Muslim women than here in Australia.

Muslim women campaigners across the globe consider family violence among the Muslim community as a complicated human rights issue; this creates a legal framework in which governments have been forced to respond to women's concerns by international institutions because of convention obligations.

Abuse unique to Muslim

In 2011, the AMWCHR undertook secondary research and developed the following list of types of family violence Muslim women experience both as immigrant, first/second generation and non-immigrant women (El Matrah & Bedar 2011):

AMWCHR, through its 23 years of working with Muslim women on family violence, found that abuse that mobilises religion is fundamental to every other type of abuse directed at Muslim and other believing women. When Muslim men seek to justify their violence, whether they are believing men or not, they use religion.

Spiritual and religious abuse includes:

- Using religion to normalise abuse and violence;
- Using religion to dominate, exercise authority and claim superiority in the relationship; for example, for a man to use parts of the Qur'an selectively to promote his own interests;
- Threatening or joking to marry a second wife;
- Using religious leaders to dissuade women from seeking recourse because 'it is against the religion to go outside the community'
- Using religious leaders to pressure women in courts to withdraw their complaints
- Giving the partner incorrect religious information to promote a person's own interests and needs;
- Informing the partner that she will be condemned by God if she does not have sex with him whenever he wants
- Using the partner's religious or spiritual beliefs to manipulate them;

- Preventing the partner from practising their religious or spiritual beliefs;
- Ridiculing the other person's religious or spiritual beliefs;
- Forcing the children to be reared in a faith that the partner has not agreed to;
- Polygyny;
- Early and forced marriage.
- Refusing or preventing women from securing religious divorce.

From this list, early and forced marriage (EFM), polygyny and religious divorce are complex examples of family violence that require further research both in terms of women's experiences and in developing appropriate service response.

Other forms of family violence experienced by Muslim women are:

Sexual abuse

For women with insecure migration status³:

- Informing her that she is required to have sex with him whenever he wants because her eligibility for citizenship or residency depends on him;
- Alleging on legal papers that she has a history of prostitution;

Emotional abuse

For women, especially those with insecure migration status (see WCDFVS 2006):

- Calling her racist names;
- Accusing her of abandoning her culture;
- Threatening to harm someone in her family in Australia or in her country of origin;
- Hiding or destroying important legal papers, such as her passport or the children's passports or birth certificates;
- Destroying her personal belongings from her country of origin;
- Convincing her that in Australia family violence is not illegal;
- Convincing her that if she seeks police, welfare or the courts' assistance, he will automatically receive legal custody of the children;
- Accusing her of marrying him for migration purposes only and threatening to or actually reporting her to immigration authorities;
- Blaming her for breaking up their family and community if she leaves him;
- Threatening deportation: refusing to file or withdrawing immigration papers.

³ It is important to note that even when Muslim women have become citizens, perpetrators are still able to convince them that their residency in Australia is completely reliant on the perpetrator and may be withdrawn if she does not acquiesce to his wishes.

Frequently, abusers of women also use children to manipulate their victims by:

- Threatening to send children back to country of origin marked by war, civil unrest or regular and unpunished acts of violence against women by community or family
- Threatening to or actually abducting the children, perhaps returning them to the country of origin where women may have no legal entitlement to custody;
- Threatening to or actually harming the children;
- Taking money that she intended to support family members in her home country;
- Raising the immigration status of a woman in custody cases, to undermine the woman's case for custody and divert the court's attention away from family violence.

Financial/economic abuse

For women, especially those with insecure migration status:

- Forcing her to work illegally;
- Harassing her at work so that she is fired from the only job at which she can legally work;
- Preventing her from working;
- Stealing money she is sending to her home country to support her family;
- Preventing her from learning English and attaining other skills that she needs to secure a job which pays a living wage.

Social abuse

For women, especially those with insecure migration status, the following manipulation of cultural taboos and more might be used:

- Writing or telling the victim's family lies about her;
- Humiliating her in front of family and friends;
- Divulging family secrets;
- Causing her or her family to lose face in the community;
- Preventing her from meeting with people from her country who speak her native language;
- Cancelling her subscriptions to newspapers and magazines in her language;
- Isolating her from family and other supportive individuals within her cultural community;
- Preventing, restricting and controlling her interactions with the English-speaking community;
- Forcing her to sign papers in English that she does not understand.

2. How has violence against Muslim women been addressed?

The state and federal governments' *Action Plans*⁴ demonstrate a willingness and commitment to focus on the issues facing women from immigrant, refugee and CALD backgrounds.

However, this submission refers to submissions made by the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) which document the way in which these policy frameworks and others have resulted in little or no resources or programs to CALD communities. The situation for Muslim communities is dire. In the 23 years of service provision by AMWCHR, there has not been funding from State government nor its newly formed advisory bodies allocated to the prevention or response to family violence for Muslim women. Similarly, no research or policy frameworks have been developed that adequately include or reflect the needs of Muslim communities.

Below are several examples of work and projects carried out by AMWCHR on prevention of violence against women and children. This work represents the first and only of its kind specifically targeted to Muslim women and the professionals and services that cater to them, and should therefore serve as a model for replication in future violence prevention work:

- Settlement Support and Casework delivery for SGP Muslim women in Melbourne, Goulburn and Mallee SDs. It is important to note that since 2012, family violence constitutes approximately 80% of our casework services.
- *The Citizenship and Anti-violence Settlement Project*: civic and legal literacy programs, with a special emphasis on family violence and Australian family law
- *Violence Against Women and Children is Unacceptable*: community education campaign to shift attitudes conducive to violence against women and to increase women's awareness of their legal rights and entitlements, and finally, to increase the capacity of the community and legal sectors to work with Muslim women escaping violence.
- *Faith and Justice in the Family*: An anti violence community education project and legal literacy program to increase Muslim women's understanding of family violence and the Victorian legal sector.
- *Building Futures*: Capacity building for professionals in the community sector on early and forced marriage. Information sessions to young women and mothers

⁴ At the federal level the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. And at the state level *Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children-Everyone has a responsibility to act 2012-15*.

on forced on early marriage, and development of materials and resources to aid mainstream providers working with Muslim women and girls, and their families.

- Relevant publications to support Muslim women, service providers working with Muslim women and the wider community:
 - *Working Muslim women on the effects of family violence and child sexual abuse on children* 2013.
 - *Muslim Women, Islam and Family Violence: A guide for changing the way we work with Muslim women experiencing family violence*, 2011.
 - *Islam and Muslims oppose violence against women: A Guide for Muslim Women – Turkish* (2011) (audio version also available for illiterate women)
 - *Islam and Muslims oppose violence against women: A Guide for Muslim Women – Arabic* (2011) (audio version also available for illiterate women)
 - *Islam and Muslims oppose violence against women: A Guide for Muslim Women – Dari* (2011) (audio version also available for illiterate women)
 - *Islam and Muslims oppose violence against women: A Guide for Muslim Women – English* (2011)
 - *Respectful Dialogue: A Guide for Responsible Reporting on Female Genital Cutting* (2014).

The above work has been primarily funded through philanthropic donors and federal government. Similarly to other work in this sector, it is heavily reliant on funding opportunities which can mean that there is no consistent and comprehensive approach to family violence. This is because organisations are forced to move from one funding source to another and are vulnerable to changes in policy/funding directions of these donors. As such, sustainable, long-term and consistent resourcing of projects like the ones described above is highly desirable if substantial attitudinal change is to take place with regard to family violence. To this end, AMWCHR welcomes the *Family Violence Index* and funding from the *Family Violence Fund* that is to be allocated following the findings of the Royal Commission.

3. How Should Violence against Muslim women be addressed?

Based on our experience working with Muslim women and communities, AMWCHR offers the following reflections and recommendations on family violence prevention strategies, policies, programs and best practice:

1. Allow and support community ownership by supporting community capacity building and prevention programs to be led by communities themselves. Ensure community education and community led initiatives receive immediate and consistent support and recognition at the policy, funding and research level. These initiatives should have targeted messaging for Muslim communities and be led by women community leaders with expertise in violence in the home. Community led initiatives should focus on:
 - Undertaking community awareness and education campaigns on family violence
 - Developing programs to shift attitudes and beliefs which support violence against women
 - The intersection between settlement, migration, and cultural-religious factors that interact with family violence in Muslim communities
 - The role of gender inequality in family violence
 - The role of racism in preventing women from seeking assistance
 - Ensuring *equal* partnership with mainstream service providers.

2. Incorporate wider definitions of family violence in terms of the experience of Muslim women beyond the Family Violence Act (Victoria) 2008 and subsequent amendments including those around children witnessing family violence. Obvious forms of abuse, such as physical abuse, are increasingly acknowledged, and abuses of an emotional, psychological and economic nature are increasingly recognised in the general community. However, it is important to build an understanding of the ways that family violence can operate in the lives of Muslim women.

3. Capacity building for service sector workers and professionals should include:
 - Professional development and training sessions for:
 - Frontline service providers across the Victoria service system
 - Hospital staff
 - Child Protection services
 - Members of Victoria Police
 - Partnership and advice on individual complex cases, including early and forced marriage

4. Compliment community capacity building and family violence prevention work with community-led initiatives which seek to increase the status of women in the community.

5. Sustained funding with a wider spread for preventative work to be meaningful and long lasting.
6. Integration of family violence services is important. However, it is important that integration does not result in mainstreaming of service provision. Integration and coordination must occur through/with the following in mind:
 - Support and resourcing to community organisations and CALD specific organisations to, not only inform and consult, but partner and lead on issues related to violence against Muslim women and their children, Muslim women's leadership and capacity building and community capacity building.
 - The intersection between issues around settlement, gender inequality, socioeconomic disadvantage, family breakdown, intergenerational conflict, and trauma associated with the refugee experience need to be catered to through integrated responses.
 - Plurality and diversity within Islam needs to be acknowledged. As well, it is important to acknowledge that CALD communities are not homogenous. They are diverse in terms of culture, religion and levels of religious adherence and practice, level of education, language(s) spoken, and social and political backgrounds (Taylor, Natalie and Putt 2007; CASE 2014, 3).
 - Regional Integration Committees (RICs) (Need to work with Muslim and CALD organisations to be informed, particularly on sensitive issues such as EFM as well as information share with them.
 - Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF), offered by DVRCV, could benefit from partnership with community/CALD organisations.
7. Invest \$500,000 over 5 years to support research, community and sector capacity building by the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights to address violence against Muslim women. This project will:
 - Undertake statewide research on Muslim women's experience of family violence and evaluate sector responses;
 - Build on the resources and material the AMWCHR has developed to date, to further increase Muslim women's understanding of family violence and work to shift community views and beliefs which may promote or support violence in the home;
 - Develop and implement an education program for young Muslim on family violence

- Support service providers to better adapt to the needs of Muslim women;
- Publish research funding for the community sector to guide practice
- Produce a model of practice for working with Muslim women for the service sector.

Appendix

Data on Muslim Women and Family Violence in Australia

No current data exists about service access of Muslim women seeking assistance for family violence. It should be noted that, with exception of the Muslim Women's Support Centre in NSW, no Muslim women's organisation is specifically funded to support or assist Muslim women experiencing family violence. It is unlikely, therefore, that such data adequately reflects the true victimisation rates of Muslim women:

- Between 2005 and 2008, on average 42% of the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights clients were women seeking assistance for family violence. In 2009–2010 that average rose to 80%.
- • In 2005–2006, the Muslim Women's Support Centre, a refuge for women escaping family violence run by the United Muslim Women's Association (NSW), provided support to 437 clients; 26% of these clients were children accompanying mothers fleeing violent homes. In 2009–2010 that rose to 821 clients, with 239 women seeking assistance turned away because of unavailable housing/ services.

Given the dearth of information available on Muslim women's usage of domestic violence services, the Centre often utilises the data below to map service access for Muslim women. Obviously there are many issues associated with using such data, but in the absence of more meaningful data, it provides a provisional account of Muslim women's needs:

- Women from Muslim-majority countries comprised 11.6% of clients accessing support from the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Services of Victoria between 2007–2008. In 2009–2010 that percentage increased to 12.4%.

- In 2005–2006, 40.8% of women accessing the Immigrant Women’s Domestic Violence Service (IWDVS) came from countries in which Muslims form the overwhelming majority. Furthermore, its three highest groups of service users were: Middle Eastern and/or Arabic speakers; from the African community; or Turkish women. In 2006–2007, the proportion of women from Muslim majority countries accessing IWDVS remained stable at 39.3%. In 2008–2009 that average was 27.3%.

In Victoria, we know that 37.5% of clients accessing Women’s Domestic Violence Service of Victoria were born overseas in non-English speaking countries. The total population of Victorians born overseas (in English and non-English speaking countries) is 25.1%⁵ , suggesting that women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are over represented as clients of the Women’s Domestic Violence Service of Victoria (AMWCHR 2011).

References

- ¹ Lovat, T., Mitchell, B., Nilan, P., Hosseini, S.A.H., Cook, B., Samarayi, I., Mansfield, M., *Australian Muslim Jobseekers: Labour Market Experience, Job Readiness and the Relative Effectiveness of Employment Support Services, A Research Report*, The University of Newcastle Australia, October 2011.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *2006 Census of Population and Housing*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2006.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Defining the Data Challenge for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2013*, at < <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4529.0main+features100012013>>.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Abs, *2011 Census of Population and Housing, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011*.
- Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR), *Race, Faith and Gender: Converging Discriminations Against Muslim Women in Victoria: The Ongoing Impact of September 11, 2001*, Final Report, 2008.
- Bartels, L., 'Emerging Issues in Domestic/Family Violence Research', *Research in Practice*, No. 10., Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), Australian Government, April 2010.
- Centre for Advocacy, Support and Education for Refugees (CASE), *Submission to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee: Domestic Violence in Australia*, CASE, 2014.
- Council to Homeless Persons (CHP), Domestic and family violence number one cause of homelessness, Media Release, CHP, November 22nd 2013. At < <http://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/131123-White-Ribbon-Day.pdf>>.
- El Matrah, J., Bedar, A., Lotia, N., *Muslim Women, Islam and Family Violence: A guide for changing the way we work with Muslim women experiencing family violence*, AMWCHR, ___ 2011.
- Homelessness Australia, *Homelessness and Women Face Sheet*, April 2013. At < http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/images/publications/FactSheets/Homelessness_and_Women.pdf>.

- inTouch, Multicultural Centre against Family Violence, *Submission to Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration Inquiry into Domestic Violence in Australia*, August 2014.
- inTouch, Multicultural Centre against Family Violence, *Submission to Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration Inquiry into Domestic Violence in Australia*, August 2014.
- Lovat, T., Mitchell, B., Nilan, P., Hosseini, S.A.H., Cook, B., Samarayi, I., Mansfield, M., *Australian Muslim Jobseekers: Labour Market Experience, Job Readiness and the Relative Effectiveness of Employment Support Services, A Research Report*, The University of Newcastle Australia, October 2011.
- Morgan, A., Chadwick, H., 'Key issues in domestic violence', *Research in Practice Summary Paper*, No. 7., Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), Australian Government, December 2009.
- Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH), *Submission to the Australian Senate's Finance and Public Affairs Administration References Committee into domestic violence in Australia*, 2014.
- Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH), *Submission to the Australian Senate's Finance and Public Affairs Administration References Committee into domestic violence in Australia*, 2014.
- Pease, B., Rees, S., 'Researching domestic violence in refugee families', *DVIRC Quarterly 1.*, 2007.
- Simmons, F., O'Brien, B., David, F., Beacroft, L., 'Human trafficking and slavery offenders in Australia', *Trends & Issues in crime and criminal justice*, Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), Australian Government, No. 464., November 2013.
- Taylor, N., Natalie and Putt, J., 'Adult sexual violence in Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia', *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice*, Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC, Australian Government, No. 345., September 2007.
- Tually, S., *Women, domestic and family violence and homelessness: A synthesis report*, Flinders Institute for Housing, Urban and Regional Research, Adelaide, 2008.
- United Nations (UN), Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the convention. Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Australia. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Seventy-Seventh Session, Geneva, 2-27 August 2010.
- White Ribbon, 2014. At < <http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/white-ribbon-importance>>.

- Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Service (WCDFVS), *A call for national women's safety plan to address domestic and family violence, 2006.*