



# 1. Improving health equity through in-language health education: Health in my Language

For migrant and refugee communities, access to in-language and culturally tailored health information can change lives. Health in My Language (HIML), a national initiative led by Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) in partnership around Australia, is a clear example of this.

HIML began in 2022 as a national response to address barriers to vaccine hesitancy and uptake during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today it is a thriving program that delivers in-language sexual and reproductive health, mental health and cancer screening education to migrant and refugee communities in every state and territory in Australia. HIML's outreach model ensures that migrant and refugee women can access information and support where it works best for them: where they work, live, study and play. Sessions are delivered by accredited Bilingual Health Educators to women who are least likely to access mainstream services, such as migrant women workers, those who are newly arrived or parenting in the early years, on precarious visas, who have low or no proficiency in English and need additional information and assistance to navigate Australian health and support systems.

Since 2022, HIML has delivered health education to over 65,000 migrant and refugee women and community members in 30+ languages. During this same period, almost 100 Bilingual Health Educators have been trained to be part of the workforce. The Senate Committee, in response to the Inquiry into Universal Access to Reproductive Health in 2023, identified the HIML Program as an important national platform for advancing sexual and reproductive health equity.

The HIML Program, with its existing infrastructure of highly trained and skilled Bilingual Health Educators, Program Managers, Coordinators and support staff, is perfectly positioned to expand its brief to include additional health topics and increase reach. HIML exists to

make sure migrant and refugee communities have access to clear, accurate and culturally relevant health information – in their own language.

With ongoing funding, the program would continue to deliver a broad range of topics, reaching migrant and refugee women across Australia with key health education and messaging. With additional funding, the HIML program has the potential to play a broader role within the health system. Some options for building on the existing infrastructure include:

- increase HIML specific targeting strategies and reach to additional groups that have significant needs for in-language education, such as PALM scheme workers, young women, international students and more newly arrived communities;
- increase the breadth of topics covered by HIML to deliver on government priorities, potentially adding domestic, family and sexual violence, workplace sexual harassment, preventing stillbirth, and heart health;
- further investigate the options for formalising and accrediting the national bilingual health educator workforce;
- extend the scope of HIML to address the health of migrant and refugee men and boys.

# How do we know Health in my Language works?

## The HIML Evaluation Report shows that



91% said that the sessions were clear and easy to understand.

90% said that the sessions met their language and cultural needs.



In the 2025-26 year, a total of



8,152 people participated in the HIML program nationwide.

Evaluation showed that in the 2024-25 year



98% said they would share the information they learnt with others

94% said they would talk to their healthcare provider about sexual and reproductive health



# In 2026-27 MCWH calls upon the Australian Government to:

Provide sustainable, multi-year funding to Health in my Language.

## Option 1: \$21,600,000 (lapsed funding amount)

Continue to deliver HIML in each state and territory, with the same breadth of topics and a reduced reach in each jurisdiction.

## Silver option 2: \$26,127,400

Continue to deliver HIML in each state and territory, with the same breadth of topics and the same reach in each jurisdiction. In addition, investigate and develop options to formalise and extend the national Bilingual Health Educator workforce.

## Gold option 3: \$30,981,000

Continue to deliver HIML in each state and territory, with an increased breadth of topics and increased reach in each jurisdiction, including migrant and refugee men, PALM scheme workers, young women, international students, and more newly arrived communities. In addition, investigate and develop options to formalise and extend the national Bilingual Health Educator workforce.

Hear directly from women and community members who have experienced the impact of Health in My Language.

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