

3. Leading national capacity building efforts to prevent gendered violence in migrant and refugee communities

While the Albanese Government has made significant strides in gender equality, primary prevention and response, MCWH's proposed targeted investment seeks to ensure that migrant and refugee women and their communities do not get left behind.

The domestic and family violence system remains inaccessible to many migrant and refugee women. Research has shown that domestic, family and sexual violence reporting remains low among migrant and refugee women compared to the general population, even when there is high profile government activity to address the problem.¹² This data is particularly concerning given that for migrant and refugee women, violence can be more severe and prolonged, due to service access barriers.¹³

With respect to workplace sexual harassment, even though rates are higher among migrant and refugee women, reporting is low. A recent study showed that only 15% of migrant and refugee women who experienced sexual harassment reported the abuse to an authority outside of the workplace, and 37% told no one about their experiences. In one third of cases, the women had been threatened or warned not to report the abuse.¹⁴

More investment must be made into community-led programs that build awareness about domestic, family and sexual violence and facilitate earlier access to the system, including tailored, in-language, community-based, outreach programs.¹⁵ Research has shown that the multicultural sector and multicultural communities play an essential role in preventing gendered violence and supporting migrant and refugee women to respond to gendered violence at an earlier point. However, there is a need to ensure that multicultural and settlement organisations are adequately supported with the skills, resources and frameworks they need to provide a consistent and effective, rather than an ad hoc and potentially harmful, response.¹⁶

It is essential that, alongside response programs, there is a long-term investment into the primary prevention of violence, recognising that migrant and refugee women and

How do we know MCWH's capacity building works?



5,496
downloads of MCWH's seminal preventing violence resources since October 2020.



1,932
downloads of Connecting Communities resources, developed in partnership with Safe and Equal since February 2024.

For the last **10 years**, MCWH has been a key partner in **research on gendered violence in migrant and refugee communities**, working closely with community organisations, academics and other research institutions. With **over 15 peer reviewed journal articles and reports**, this research has been impactful and influential, totalling

495 citations

over this time.

their representative organisations have a central, leading role to play. Migrant and refugee women's organisations should be provided with ongoing and secure funding to enable them to share their specialist expertise, to build capacity within multicultural organisations and communities, and to ensure that effort is coordinated, thereby reducing the current duplication of effort and loss of practice wisdom that is occurring nationally.

The multicultural sector and multicultural communities need to be supported to do this work in a consistent and coordinated way. Investment in national consistency and capacity building is crucial to ensuring the health and safety of migrant and refugee women and is essential in progressing the government's agenda with respect to gender equity and gendered violence prevention.

MCWH has played a central, specialist, national role preventing gendered violence since 2014 – providing evidence-based guidance and resources to the domestic, family and sexual violence and multicultural sectors, conducting ground-breaking research, and delivering gendered violence prevention programs, with a specific focus on migrant and refugee women and their communities. MCWH is uniquely placed to lead national capacity building efforts, having robust theoretical expertise, practice experience and sustained relationships with migrant organisations, women and communities fostered through over 45 years of experience working in women's health and the multicultural sector.

Testimonial from Our Watch:

In 2025, Our Watch began a **two-year partnership** with Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) on a project which aims to ensure **primary prevention approaches are responsive to the needs of people from migrant and refugee backgrounds**, building on the strong foundation of collaborative work undertaken together over many years. **Our partnership with MCWH is pivotal to this work, as they bring over 46 years of expertise in feminist, intersectional approaches to primary prevention in multicultural contexts across research, policy, advocacy, and capacity building.** As a community-led organisation, **MCWH is expertly positioned to guide a national, coordinated approach that centres the voices and experiences of migrant and refugee women.**

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

Provide ongoing funding to MCWH to:

- a.** extend its specialist capacity building role nationally to facilitate consistency, reduction of duplication, and the sharing of practice wisdom, among key stakeholders, including multicultural organisations and communities delivering gendered domestic, family and sexual violence prevention programs and activity.
- b.** engage men and boys from multicultural communities in a specific program to prevent gendered violence, and develop a national guide for the multicultural sector, the domestic, family and sexual violence sector and multicultural communities.
- c.** deliver in-language education about gendered violence, including domestic, family and sexual violence, and workplace sexual harassment across Australia, utilising the existing infrastructure of the national Health in my Language program.

Over 4 years \$2,170,300.