

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

Annual Report 18–19

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Acknowledgment of Country

This report recognises that gender, race and religion intersect to create multiple forms of discrimination and violence against Muslim women. It also recognises that preventing prejudice in all forms is bound to the struggles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and before we can successfully tackle issues within our communities, we must address the ongoing impacts of colonisation, racism and bigotry in this country.

The Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our centre is located and where we conduct our work. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. AMWCHR is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.



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

**Executive
Committee**

Tasneem Chopra
Chair

Hena Kalam
Deputy Chair

Rasheeda Cooper
Treasurer

**Committee
Members**

Anisa Buckley
Marwa Khalaf

Faiza Yunus

Inaz Janif

**Management
Team**

Joumanah El Matrah
(resigned June 2019)
Chief Executive Officer

Nesreen Bottriell
Chief Operations Officer



AUSTRALIAN MUSLIM WOMEN'S CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Equality without Exception

About us

The Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR) was established in 1991 by Muslim women for Muslim women. The AMWCHR was founded on the belief that empowering Muslim women could be achieved both individually and by building their collective capacity.

As a leading voice on Muslim women's rights, we are aligned 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 everyday. 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 descendants of diverse pluralistic traditions, 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. Historically, how Islam was understood impacted the status of women and is a testament 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 a seminal part of Muslim women's history.

Today, all over the world, Muslim women are working as agents of resistance who are often seen leading movements demanding change. This global movement for equality resonates with Australian Muslim women, whether immigrants or daughters of immigrants, as they face similar challenges closer to home. In an Australian context our demands exist both within and external to our communities in our pursuit of equality, not only with Muslim men, but with the greater Australian society.

How does our world view 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 or violation against 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. This allows us to work with the diverse spectrum of Muslim women.

Our strategic intent

The Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR) is an organisation of Muslim women to advance the rights and status of Muslim women in Australia.

We believe Muslim women must be the impetus for leading change in their status as citizens and part of a larger community.

The Australian Muslim community is characterised by diversity and hybridity, and not by one 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, informed analysis and to advocate for reform.

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:

- casework, referrals, and outreach
- advocacy
- community-based programs
- capacity building
- leadership development
- policy development
- partnership projects
- research and publications.

We contribute to public discourse on Muslim women's issues, advocating for the rights of Muslim women through our research, publications and consultancy work. Our training services are provided to strengthen sector organisations to adequately respond to Muslim communities through capacity building and awareness raising training. This work draws on our expertise formed through working with Muslim women and young Muslims.

Message from the Chair and Board

This year has been marked by growth and change for the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights. We have substantially increased the services we provide to women, while also creating new programs and strategies that better respond to their needs to empower change and build resilience in our own communities.

We provided a diverse range of services to Muslim women, young Muslims and community sector professionals across Australia. Our targeted work with women continues through the provision of information in workshops and capacity building group-work sessions. While our engagement with young Muslims predominantly through schools and community groups has continued to focus on strengthening individual capacity and resilience to combat the impacts of racism and strengthen identity. The increased number of Muslim women and young Muslims engaging with our various services is reflective of the innovative nature of our staff, the uniqueness of the programs they've developed, the client-centred approach in which they work, and their commitment to driving and leading change in their own communities.

This year has seen the continued demand for targeted casework services to respond to the increasing complexities of Muslim women's experience of family violence, settlement, and the need for individual and culturally nuanced support. Our casework team has continued to grow in response to community and sector demand for our specialised services in support of Muslim women.

We have continued to work throughout the country with both established and newly arrived migrant and young women. At the state level our team has undertaken work in Mildura, Shepparton and Geelong in addition to our usual work in Melbourne. Our group-work programs with communities and our training sessions on Islam, diversity, family violence and forced marriage across rural Victoria have seen us develop strong and important networks and relationships across the state.

At the national level, we have undertaken research and advocacy, contributed to policy development, participated in advisory groups

and undertaken media work on migrant and Muslim women. We have worked closely with civil and Government services to advocate for positive client outcomes and have established ourselves as specialists with expertise in championing Muslim women's human rights across the sector.

Combating racism and increasing Islamophobia has remained a prominent theme in our work as Australia continues to struggle with these issues in the media and in our political discourse. We have worked to respond to these issues in the media but have had to work a lot harder to mitigate the impact of racism and Islamophobia on the lives of women, young Muslims and our community. It has been concerning how little awareness society has about the impact of prejudice on children. This is one of the many ongoing issues that demonstrate how important it is for minority communities and minority women to have community specific organisations that reflect their needs and experiences.

We would like to thank all our partners in the work we do. Without our partnerships with other organisations and our donors, both government and philanthropic, we could not fulfil the important role we have in the sector.

A heartfelt thanks to our extraordinary staff who serve the community with dedication, integrity and excellence. A big thank you also to our amazing Board members who continue to volunteer their time to serve our community of Muslim women.

This year we farewelled our long-standing CEO, Joumanah El Matrah after 18 years of dedication, commitment and service to the organisation. Her work over the years has contributed to the organisations reputation amongst community, sector and government as a leading voice and advocate for Muslim women in Australia. Joumanah led the organisation by drawing from the global struggle of Muslim women and applied this



AMWCHR Staff with
Tasneem Chopra

to the Australian context feeding program and capacity development across our local communities. We thank Joumanah for her incredible contribution to the organisation and for her work towards improving the lives of Muslim women in Australia.

It is with great pleasure that the Board of the AMWCHR announces the appointment of Diana Sayed as the new CEO – and welcomes her to the team. Diana joins AMWCHR as an international human rights lawyer having worked in both Australia and the United States. She is the former Campaigns Manager at Fair Agenda and Senior Crisis Response Campaigner at Amnesty International Australia.

The Board, in consultation with the staff of AMWCHR, developed its new Strategic Plan which will be delivered over the ensuing 3 years until 2022, setting a vision for the ongoing growth and continued capacity building of Muslim women for the years to come.

Congratulations to the staff and Board on another incredible year!

Tasneem Chopra – Chairperson

I am delighted to see another year at AMWCHR deliver such valuable services to our client community. In centring women's rights as human rights, we aim to represent women of diverse backgrounds with full equality. I could not be more proud of AMWCHR and it's incredible team.

Dr Anisa Buckley

2019 has been a year of change for all of us. We endeavour to uphold the legacy that Joumanah left behind with great honour, and we look forward to furthering AMWCHR's progress and impact with Diana, our new CEO, and the rest of our dedicated team.'

Inaz Janif

It is such an honour to be part of an amazing organisation such as AMWCHR, lead by women for women, making a difference every day. It is always inspiring to see all the important and necessary work that the staff conduct and I am excited to see what the new team including our new CEO, will bring to fruition in the years to come. A big thank you to Joumanah for all her work, extreme dedication and impact over so many years.

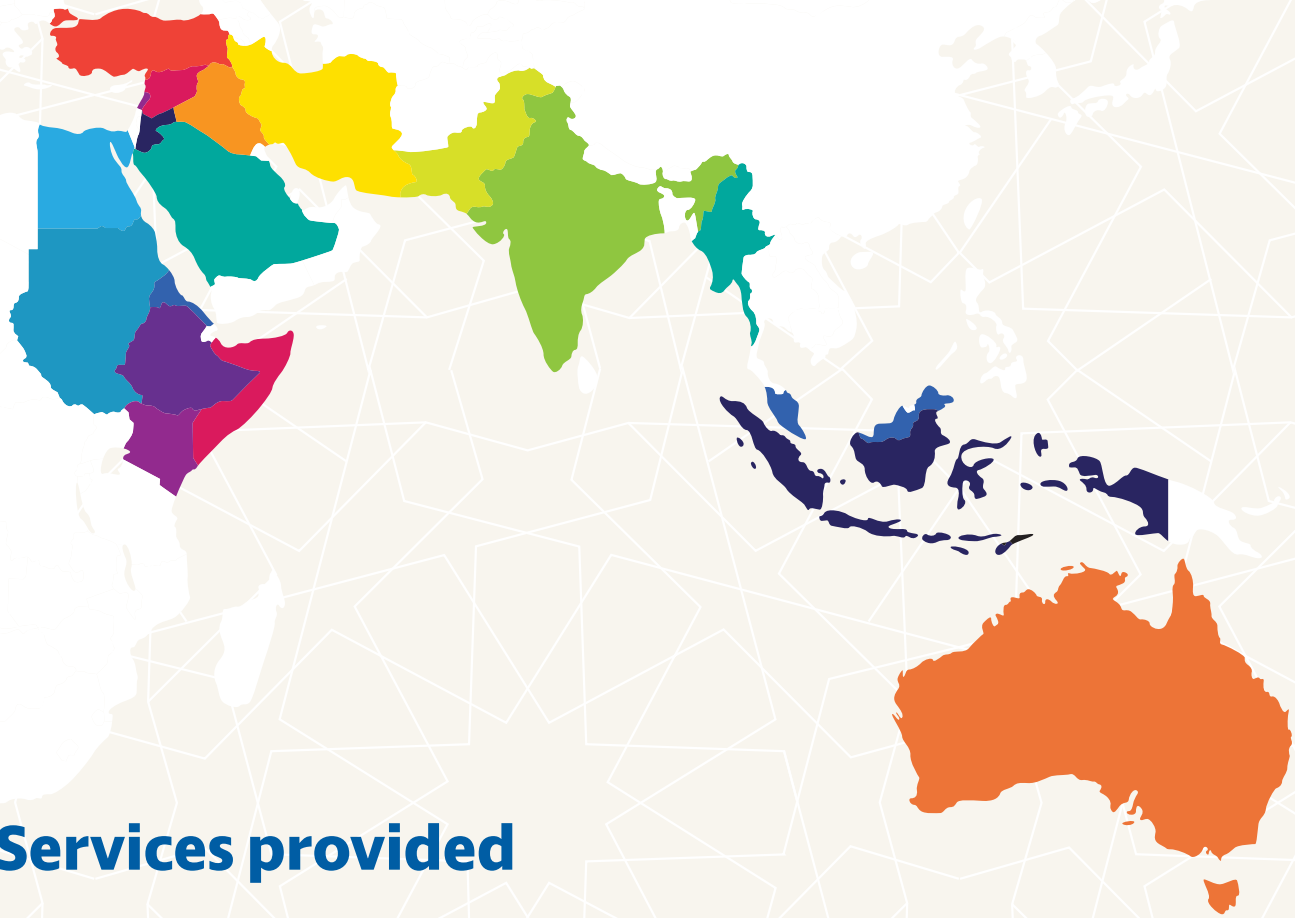
Rasheeda Cooper

I congratulate our staff for their ongoing commitment to working for "Equality without Exception" for Australian Muslim Women, especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged. The organisation has continued successfully through major changes this year. As we farewelled Joumanah Elmatrah as CEO, we acknowledge her many years of dedication, insight, leadership and service. We welcome Diana Sayed as our new CEO, with anticipation of our future development and growth.

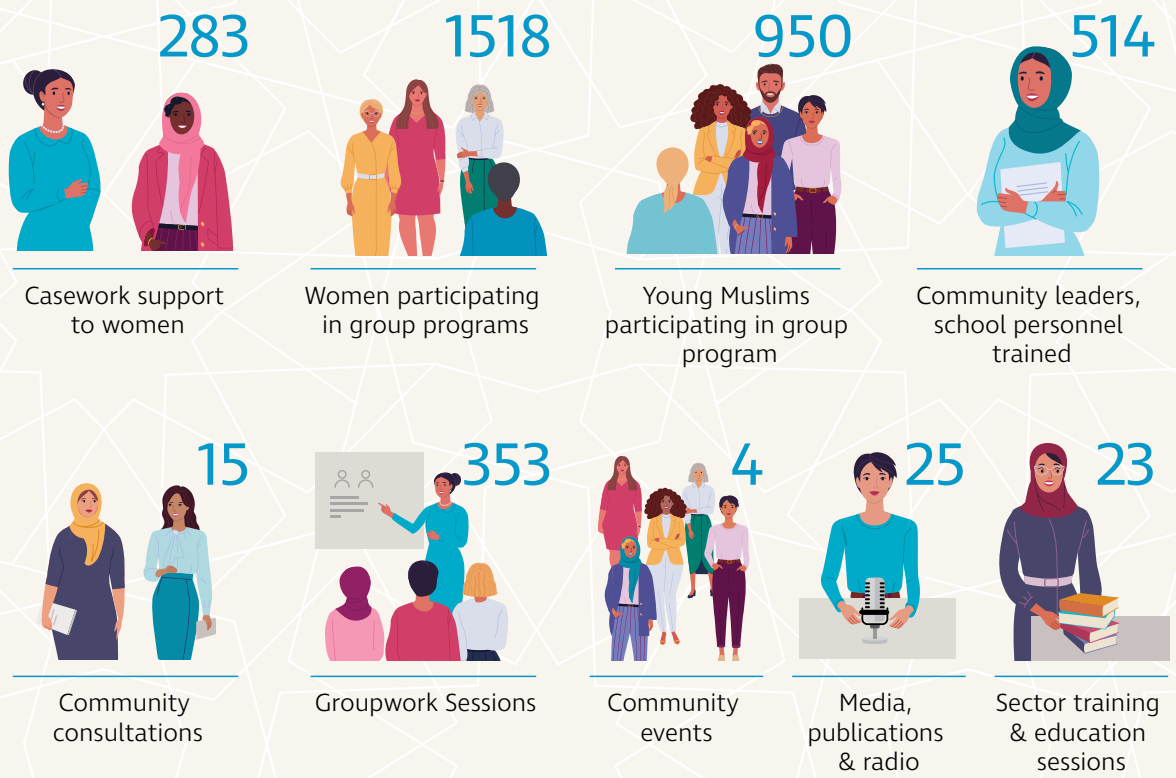
The end of 2019 also marks my departure as Chair and Board member of AMWCHR after over a decade in this role and more than 25 years with the Centre. It is fair to say that AMWCHR has become a fixture in my life that has enabled me enormous growth and gratitude. Witnessing the evolution of this organisation from a veritable idea into a fully flourishing national body with international reach in advancing the welfare of Muslim women, has been an absolute privilege. The women who serve as staff and Board members are amongst the most dedicated and integrity-driven individuals I have known. I am buoyed by the capacity of our team as I exit AMWCHR, knowing it is in such capable hands. I look forward to supporting from the sidelines in future and will watch with almost maternal pride as the Centre progresses from strength to strength. Thank you to each and every one of you who have made my association with AMWCHR a professional and personal highlight of my life. I leave with nothing but admiration, respect and solidarity.

At a glance

Where our women are from



Services provided



Community Consultations

One of the cornerstones of the AMWCHR is the tailoring of programs and services in response to the unique needs of Muslim women and young Muslims in Australia through our regular community consultations. This year, we held 15 consultations with Muslim women and young Muslims across Melbourne with common themes and challenges centred around topics related to;

- Engaging Muslim men in parenting and shared household responsibilities.
- Challenges in accessing employment and education opportunities.
- Combating racism and discrimination.
- Safety and Muslim identity.
- Understanding Australian laws, systems and processes.
- Access to housing.
- Awareness and access to resources, including social and legal services.
- Building confidence.
- Developing improved English language skills.
- Navigating personal, family and intergenerational relationships.
- Mental health and wellbeing.
- Disconnection and isolation.

Consultation with diverse communities enables the AMWCHR to gain insight into the issues relevant to Muslim women and young Muslims in Australia, enabling the design of targeted and tailored programs and services to respond to these challenges.



Supporting settlement in Australia

Our settlement programs focus on providing a diverse range of individual services and group programs to support highly disadvantaged Muslim women and their children to navigate the complex challenges of migrating to a new country. Muslim women migrating to Australia, often coming from countries marked by devastation and conflict, face unique challenges and barriers to accessing services and engaging with Australian society. Our settlement work promotes individual and community capacity building applying a culturally sensitive lens to improving health, personal and economic wellbeing as we bring isolated vulnerable Muslim women together to build connections and social support.

Facilitating understanding of the Australian context

Information sessions are delivered to enhance awareness and education across a variety of issues to newly arrived Muslim women and young women who are often unfamiliar with systems, processes, laws, resources and services in Australia. The types of information that was delivered included:

- For parents; focusing on understanding the school and education system, school readiness programs, immunisation of children, and child protection laws.
- For women; focusing on self-care and development, managing stress and trauma, women's health topics, navigating Centrelink, financial support services, education, training and career pathways.
- For young women; sessions focused on communication skills, managing intergenerational relationships, family violence, early and forced marriage.

Women and young women attending information sessions reported improved awareness and understanding across diverse topics and found the information and its delivery helpful in supporting their settlement into Australia. Participants also shared that they had enhanced confidence to engage with relevant services and access available resources, along with increased capacity to address social issues within their families and communities.

Supporting migrant Muslim women to raise their children in the Australian context

One of the most common concerns of newly arrived Muslim women is parenting and supporting their children's settlement in their new country. With limited awareness of support services, lack of familiarity with the English language and education and health systems, along with uncertainty in how to manage and discipline their children in ways that are different from how they had traditionally and culturally been raised, many of the women feel helpless and at a loss as to how best to parent their child in ways that are relevant to the Australian context.

Our Parenting Program supported newly arrived Muslim women to navigate these issues by exploring a variety of parenting concerns and providing women with tools and skills to support effective parenting. This is achieved by equipping women with skills to better understand their children's behaviour, enhance communication with their children, and use practical tools to



manage behaviour. The program encouraged women to explore their cultural, traditional and intergenerational styles of parenting and its place within the Australian context, along with fostering connections with other Muslim women to develop a network of mutual support.

Feedback from women participating in the Parenting Program has been overwhelming. Many of the women shared the shifts they had made in their parenting styles such as making time for conversations with their children and adopting active listening techniques, resulting in notable positive changes in their children's behaviours.

“ Since coming to this program I have learnt so many new things. I don't want to miss a session and I am actually practicing the different strategies you are teaching us and am very happy with the results ”

“ I had a meeting in the city today and tried to finish it early so that I could get back to this group because I can see how much benefit I am getting out of it. Thank you. ”

“ Before I would get upset when the kids were not listening but now, I am talking with them nicely ”

Casework for newly arrived women and families

Settlement casework focuses on supporting people in the first 5 years of their settlement in Australia. For some, this will be an ongoing process well beyond 5 years but for many this initial period will shape future growth and development for new migrants and refugees. There are significant barriers to access social connection and the adjustments of expectation and reality for newly arrived residents can be deeply disappointing after long and painful migration journeys that often include surviving conflict, displacement, trauma and loss, years of instability and homelessness, detention, poverty, relationship and family breakdown.

Our goal in settlement casework is to engage clients on a meaningful level where trust and vulnerability can be a shared load. Caseworkers work to support equity and access to services and resources and take this work as an opportunity to share information on rights and opportunities for newly arrived migrants and refugees.

The relationship between client and caseworker may be the first opportunity for clients to disclose some of the painful experiences of migration and settlement and caseworkers work to validate and listen to these stories and experiences of the world and an individual's sense of place within it.

In the process of casework support there are opportunities to address systemic barriers and gaps within the welfare sector and broader society. We do this through advocacy, secondary consultation, co-case management and collaborative approaches such as partnerships, consultations, networks and communities of practice.

The key challenges for settlement clients in the past year are:

Housing: both access to crisis and public housing or access to the private rental market. There are significant shortages in available properties, often inappropriate options for temporary accommodation for women and children and for many clients the challenges of the private



rental market amplify broader experiences of limited English language, limited mobility, large families and low incomes, and sometimes demonstrate structural racism and discrimination.

Health and Mental Health: exacerbated by the experience of migration, often our client's health and wellbeing is in crisis, there are limited options to deal with mental health, particularly in culturally and linguistically meaningful ways.

Poverty: a term that encompasses so much and impacts most aspects of an individual, family and often community's life. Material and financial poverty means always being in crisis and this not only impacts on nutrition and diet, ability to take transport and pay for costs of having a home as well as have a life that has social and professional connection, but the health impacts of living in crisis, how this shapes personal wellbeing, relationships and parenting, child wellbeing are alarmingly significant.

Employment and income: many of our clients have a limited educational background, English language acquisition may therefore be challenging beyond the norm, many women we work with have young children, no car or licence, no local experience and for some no employment experience in their country of origin. In supporting client's to skill up through education and training, clients must then face workplace racism and discrimination.

When Settlement support is meaningfully delivered and received, new migrants and refugees have the capacity to stabilise and settle, to take up opportunity and go on to contribute to community and broader society.

As in all AMWCHR's work, casework works alongside the client to look at systemic disadvantage through a human rights lens and interrogate gendered disadvantage and exclusion. Through a client centred approach, women are able to name their hopes and aspirations as well as their challenges and work towards gaining agency and control of aspects of their lives.

Empowering newly arrived young Muslim women

Young people migrating to Australia with or without their parents also need support in settling into Australia. For many, the exposure to a new school environment, different educational systems and a social environment that holds differing cultural values to what they were raised in are daunting challenges they must deal with. Coupled with the lack of familiarity with the English language and being targets of discrimination and increased Islamophobia, young people need extensive resources to equip them with tools and skills to support their settlement in Australia.

AMWCHR has a range of programs for newly arrived Muslim young people that addresses different aspects of their developmental needs including the Living in Australia series of workshops, leadership development, peer support and study skills.

The **Living in Australia** program was developed to focus on self-awareness and identity in order to build confidence and strong communication skills. This is achieved through goal planning, understanding the Victorian education system, pathways to tertiary education, career and employment options, health and wellbeing, healthy relationships and laws in Australia related to marriage. While the **Leadership Program** develops capacity for newly arrived migrant young women to become active in school and community roles, focussing on communication skills, confidence building, conflict resolution skills, identity and personal goals, human rights and gender issues. Through these programs, young women expressed a greater sense of confidence to play more active roles in their social circles and to engage with their communities, and felt more confident in accessing services to support their wellbeing. Young women also shared a deeper understanding of goal setting and researching career pathways to enhance their

long-term goals and were able to demonstrate and verbalise their short-term education and employment goals.

Meeting other young migrant Muslim women who have chartered successful careers motivates other newly arrived young women as it gives hope that they too can craft a positive future for themselves. This is the purpose of **Peer Support sessions** held by AMWCHR. Sessions throughout the year included a family violence caseworker who shared her educational and career journey in the field of family violence and criminal justice, another included a young Afghan educator who was undertaking her Master's studies. The guest speakers shared the challenges they faced settling in Australia with no family support, raising families, striving for their personal and professional goals whilst still maintaining their dignity, self-respect and identities.

“I enjoyed this program a lot, we learnt many things like communication and emotions”

To support young newly arrived Muslim women to succeed in their educational pursuits, AMWCHR conducts **Study Skills Sessions** providing tools and strategies on ways of managing studies, enhancing research skills and acing their scores. The sessions also focused on homework support, resume writing, interview skills, time management and goal setting. The young people who attended the sessions reported that they found them incredibly beneficial as they were the first in their families to attend formal schooling and therefore did not have any support at home. They felt that the skills they learnt help them feel more equipped in their classrooms as well as more confident to seek employment.

Muslim women's leadership

The Muslim Women's Leadership project funded by the Department of Social Services works with Muslim women from diverse backgrounds to develop leadership skills that are critical for the Muslim community's resilience. The program focuses on creating a greater sense of belonging and social inclusion that is imperative for the individual and collective empowerment, resilience, wellbeing and inclusion of Muslim women as they face a challenging socio-political environment. Taking a rights, race and gender approach the program raises Muslim women's social consciousness and promotes positive action to effect change.

Muslim women demonstrated shifts in their attitudes on gender equity, and greater confidence to take on leadership roles in the family, an ability to listen attentively and communicate better with family members and children. They were also more open to participate actively in community events offered by their children's school and had begun to look for some courses to upskill themselves. Most importantly, the women had gained a sense of pride and ownership over their growth and were confident enough to step up and share this on various public platforms during the program.

Integrated communities

The Integrated Communities Program, funded by the Department of Home Affairs, takes the lens of leadership in parenting by developing Muslim women's capacity to guide their children and other Muslim women towards civic, cultural, social and economic integration in Australia. Women attending the program reported increased awareness of barriers that impeded their personal development, improved confidence and sense of connection to the community as well as strengthening their resolve to become agents of change in how their children are raised and supported to explore their potential.

Combating Racism

Young Muslims for human rights

The Young Muslims for Human Rights project aimed to strengthen a culture of dialogue on issues experienced by young Muslims in the current climate of growing fear and Islamophobia. Young Muslim men and women tend to experience social isolation and socio-political frustration as a result of negative images and narratives about Muslims in the public sphere. Through the project, we worked with a group of young Muslim men and women to build their confidence and resilience to positively and productively engage with the broader society.

The approach was multilayered whereby camps, groupwork sessions, info sessions and workshops were weaved in together to address their experiences of exclusion and isolation, while building capacity in the areas of leadership, communication, social participation and advocacy. Sessions involved conversations of identity and diversity and skills development that supported the shifting of attitudes and equipped them with strategies to help them face discriminatory challenges within their social environment.

The level of positive engagement with the young people in the project has been our biggest success. Young people were open and honest about their needs and were keen to begin working on addressing their needs as well as participating in new activities. The young people attending the program reported increased confidence, self-esteem and positive identity as young Muslim Australians. The program also helped in strengthening young people's relationships with their peers and the teaching staff which was critical in providing a safe and nurturing space to the young people to express themselves freely and showcase their leadership capacities within their social circles.

Furthermore, several young people sought opportunities with local service providers for work experience, volunteer work and community event participation after completing the program demonstrating increased social participation.



Islamophobia and understanding rights

Spurred by consistent feedback from young Muslims on their experiences of discrimination and lack of knowledge on ways of responding, AMWCHR embarked on a community education and capacity building program to educate young Muslims about the laws, legal rights and provisions that are available to support situations where discrimination is witnessed or experienced. The program, funded by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, helped facilitate greater engagement to report and prevent the perpetuation of discriminatory acts in society. A series of 'Know Your Rights' workshops were held in various schools, community organisations and youth clubs.

The workshop modules, being engaging and discursive in format, were able to provide young Muslims with a platform to have conversations around their observations or experiences of Islamophobia and obtain factual clarifications. The young people indicated that most young Muslims have had either overt and direct, indirect or vicarious experiences with Islamophobia, whether through their school environments, their community, and the general public, including catching public transport.

Even for the young people who have not had any direct experiences of discrimination, racism or Islamophobia, most had heard about it from friends or family or more commonly observed it through media narratives. Young Muslims, however, do not have constructive avenues to have conversations about these observations and experiences, to make sense of their impact on the community, nor to learn helpful ways of dealing with them.

Through the workshop, young Muslims indicated an increased awareness on their rights, laws, ways of responding, and agencies to turn to when experiencing or witnessing discrimination. They were able to verbalise and demonstrate action steps to take as a means of responding to racism and Islamophobia and reported feeling more confident to report future experiences of Islamophobia.



Safety and Gender Equality

Promoting the safety, protection and exercise of human rights for Muslim women and young women is one of the core tenets of our work. AMWCHR intervenes, supports and educates Muslim women on these issues through a series of programs and services.

Individual family violence support

As we step more fully into providing specialist family violence case management service, we have extended our team in order to meet the demand for support with family violence issues, complex forms of violence and advocacy within the family violence sector.

Our clients come from a broad range of contexts and communities and unlike our settlement focused casework, we have far fewer restrictions on who we can work with. This breadth is so vital in addressing violence and control as determining their lives, their health, and their families wellbeing, that it has become a core focus for AMWCHR and we work with some of the most vulnerable victims, those without residency, rights or income.

Family Violence is endemic in Australian society and for the Muslim community it is no different other than the presence of many additional factors that include power, control and abuse in migration, trauma, extreme poverty, social isolation, language barriers, visa instability and homelessness.

Women contact our service mostly through word of mouth within community as well as referrals through Child Protection, Safe Steps, Orange Door, housing services, schools, courts and migrant services.

We work with women through their process from safety and risk management, crisis support and advocacy, engaging with police and courts, ensuring successful referrals to services that support women with migration, legal, housing and poverty.

We work to support women experiencing complex forms of abuse, requiring expert knowledge, longer term and intensive supports.

A number of key focus areas include:

- To reduce and prevent the use of religion as tool to control and perpetuate violence against woman and children and work to increase capacity to respond in culturally appropriate and supportive ways. We do this through trainings, secondary consultations with mainstream services and co-case management where possible.
- To raise awareness of the varied and more complex forms of family violence
- Work to promote greater understanding within the community of what constitutes family violence and how it intersects with gender equality and broader human rights
- To raise awareness of the link between early forced marriage and family violence and create strategies into prevention and early intervention of early and forced marriage and offer victims of early or forced marriage culturally sensitive support that allows a client to unpack the complexities of consent, familial, cultural and religious expectation and how they wish to respond.
- To support and respond to the complexities of denial of Islamic divorce, sometimes used by perpetrators to hold victim/survivors within their reach

- In addition to supporting women in our general family violence supports, the casework team contributed to a number of complex cases in partnership with AFP, Red Cross and the Lighthouse Foundation.

Building respectful relationships

The Respectful Relationships program was designed to increase the legal and civic literacy of both Muslim women and service providers in family violence issues affecting Muslim communities, with a particular focus on early and forced marriage. The program also aimed to improve the cultural and legal literacy to service providers working on these issues. Inputs from an experienced advisory group with members from Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, Women's Legal Service of Victoria, Northern Legal Service and Arabic Welfare Inc were incorporated into the program's design and content.

Almost 300 Muslim women and young women participated in the program, many of whom were not aware of their rights in relation to family violence and had limited knowledge about where to access support services for themselves and their children. Many also did not recognise early and forced marriage as a form of family violence. The women shared difficulties of leaving a violent relationship and community pressure to remain in relationships. Despite community awareness of family violence increasing, many participants feel that women are blamed for breaking up the family when they leave a family violence situation. Many women were interested in knowing where they could go for more help and what services were available to them.

Service provider trainings were conducted with a focus on organisations providing support to Muslim women experiencing family violence/early and forced marriage. In addition, community radio programs were delivered in Farsi, Dari, English and Turkish to discuss early and forced marriage concerns in the community.

Through this program women developed increased understandings in civic and legal literacy on issues of family violence and early and forced marriage. Furthermore, women learnt strategies for contacting service providers safely and demonstrated an understanding of self-determination as a right afforded to all women and girls, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Training of service providers yielded improvements in their confidence and knowledge in cultural understanding and capacity to work with Muslim communities to address family violence.

Foundations for stronger relationships

AMWCHR embarked on another primary prevention effort aimed at enhancing gender equality and building more gender equitable social norms and practices in the community that prevent or reduce the risk of violence and improves marital and family relationship outcomes in the Australian Muslim community. The broader goal of the project is to develop the capacity of the community to live and practice confident and respectful relationships. The program included caring for emotional health and developing personal goals, gender and self-awareness, impact of harmful marriage practices and strategies to bring change within the family.

Young women who participated in the program indicated not just increased understanding of their rights to gender equality and choices in marriage but also improved self-confidence, a sense of wellbeing, ability to decide on personal goals and premarital decision making. Whereas, older Muslim women demonstrated an increased understanding of the importance of their children making informed decisions in marriage and better ability to support their children in making marital decisions. The women were also more able to express their wants, assert their rights within the home and redefine the roles and expectations within the household. They began

to allow and include their spouses to play a part in household and child management which eventually had a profound positive effect on their family relationships.

The program supported the prevention of early and forced marriage and the protection of rights for young Muslim women against abuses. The program was able to shift women's attitudes of gendered violence within marriages with many able to identify that gendered violence has no place in a healthy marital relationship.

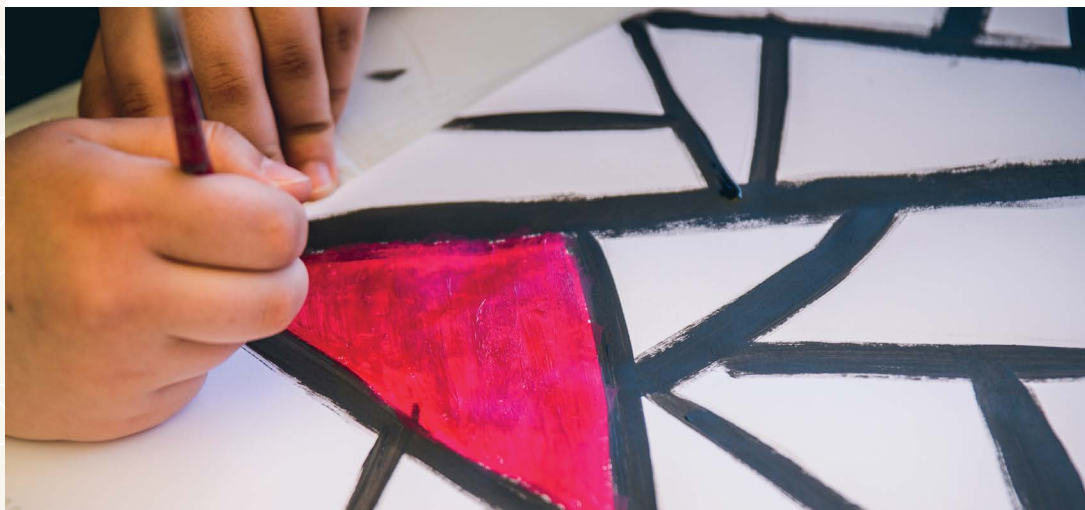
Building young Muslims awareness of gender, rights and choice

Reinforcing the importance of preventative public education on the issue of early and forced marriage experienced by young people in the community, AMWCHR embarked on a project titled My Choices funded by the Department of Home Affairs. The program aimed to provide an understanding and education about early and forced marriage (EFM) amongst young Muslim Australians in order to increase confidence and resilience towards EFM.

Many of the young women were initially unaware of Australian law on EFM, as well as the potential impact of such marriages. However, they were aware of the issue in their own communities and were keen to build an understanding of the factors influencing the issues. Throughout the program the young women challenged each other's understanding of gender roles, marriage and acceptance of cultural norms and were able to engage critically and confidently on the issue. Participants expressed that while cultural norms were difficult to change, it is important to shift norms that are harmful to young women. They were open to share their own experiences navigating these conversations with parents and extended family which was crucial to help others build confidence to speak about these topics openly.

Participants attending the program reported an increase in their understanding of Early and Forced Marriage and of Australian Laws on EFM. The program supported young Muslims to develop more gender equitable attitudes and clarity on their sense of agency in decision making over their own life, especially in relation to marriage.

“ The program made it easy to understand the laws and who can be involved in a forced marriage’ whilst another reflected that ‘people who come from cultures who deem child marriage as acceptable need to take part in programs like this one ”



Research

AMWCHR has been steadily building its research capacity to address issues that affect women's lives. In the last year we have continued work on two major research projects.

Fostering family resilience in Muslim families

Families have an important role to play in the development of resilience, well-being and sense of belonging in children. The Fostering Resilience in Muslim Families project, an action research initiative, was developed and delivered in partnership with Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health and Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation to undertake an in-depth investigation into factors influencing family resilience in Victoria's Muslim community through in-depth literature reviews and focus groups with community leaders and members of CALD communities.

Findings from the research revealed several barriers and facilitators to migrant Muslim family functioning and resilience including perceptions of safety and racism, settlement issues and stress, difficulty in adapting to post migration sociocultural changes, limited social engagement, limited understanding of stress symptoms and management and intergenerational conflict; limited communication between family members amongst others.

A group intervention program based on the findings was developed and tested through two family camps that addressed issues of individual (identity, stress symptoms, the family environment (i.e. relationships, communication, and conflict resolution) and broader systemic factors pertinent to Muslim migrants/refugees (discrimination, social engagement and social adaptation).

As a preventative program, the family resilience program demonstrated an impact on family functioning, particularly around communication and problem solving, parenting practices and increased flexibility of traditional roles and values. A recommendation for a model of practice to foster resilience in Muslim families and help prevent isolation and, potentially, radicalisation, was subsequently documented as AMWCHR's contribution to the knowledge base on evidence-based programs for Muslim families.

Increasing access to trauma-informed care for CALD and Muslim women affected by violence

The trauma-informed care project, funded by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, continued in collaboration with Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health. This research project aimed to investigate barriers and facilitators to accessing trauma-informed care for women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Muslim backgrounds who have experienced family violence.

The study explored CALD and Muslim women's experience of help-seeking and service providers' practices across a range of sectors including health and community support, through a series of focus group discussions with women and a survey of service providers. The second phase involved an assessment of the implementation of a trauma-informed model of care adapted to the needs of CALD and Muslim women. The implementation involved the provision of training and consultations with staff in Geelong agencies. Final evaluation of the pilot training will be conducted in 2019-20, with findings reported at the conclusion of the program.

Community feedback

“
I liked this program because this made me realise what I should do in order to stand for my rights”

“
The thing I enjoyed the most about these workshops was the freedom to speak and say your opinion”

“
I really enjoyed the sessions as it supports decision making”

“
I came to school today because I remembered the program was on today”

“
Since coming to this program I have learnt so many new things. I don't want to miss a session and I am actually practicing the different strategies you are teaching us and am very happy with the results”

“
There was a mountain load of skills sets unlocked within those sessions. I learnt to control myself in tight situations, deal with depression with multiple methods and etc”

“
I really loved that we could all talk freely to each other and the bond that we forged with people we now consider family”

“
The camp was a delight and the best experience we had all year”

“
I learnt about myself that I am strong and beautiful”

“
I enjoyed this program a lot, we learnt many things like communication and emotions”

“
I think the program was tailored very well. The facilitators delivered an informative and safe environment. It couldn't have been done better. Thank you.”

“
This was a wonderful initiative and I'm hoping for more events like this in the future”

Community events

Eid celebration

This year's Eid event was organised for newly arrived refugee women and children in collaboration with the Afghan Women's Association and with a community of women from Dandenong North Primary School. These events provide opportunities for newly arrived women to meet with more established members of the community and share culture, food and experiences in celebration.



Young Muslims forum

In November 2018, the AMWCHR celebrated the work of students from East Preston Islamic College who participated in the Young Muslims for Human Rights project by hosting a forum at the Islamic Museum of Australia attended by parents, teachers and siblings. The forum consolidated learnings from the program and provided an opportunity for young people to share their art work and poetry on themes including belonging, self-worth, identity, openness and vulnerability with their families and peers. The forum enabled young people to be open and honest with their parents and teachers about challenges in their lives with the benefit and safety of anonymity for those that wished. Young people shared their experience and challenges with social isolation, depression, anxiety and the lack of connection with their families, so the forum provided a safe avenue to explore sharing their experiences with their families and teachers.

The forum was also an opportunity to engage teachers to build an understanding of the methodology adopted by AMWCHR throughout the program, so that they can be incorporated into their classrooms and interactions with students going forwards.

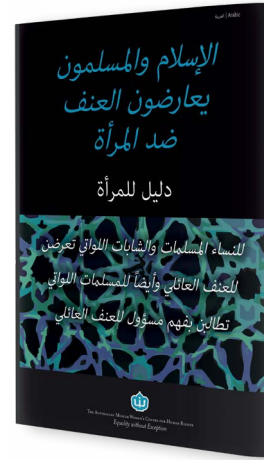
Roundtable on Marriage and Divorce

The Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights in collaboration with McKillop Family Services, held a roundtable discussion with several community and Islamic leaders to map challenges facing Muslim families, identify strategies to ensure the safety of women and children in families, and discuss ways to collaboratively strengthen and support Muslim marriages and families. The Roundtable was attended by a diverse mix of community and Islamic leaders representing different groups within the Muslim community in Australia, including representatives from the Sunni, Shia, and Alevi communities, from diverse ethnic backgrounds including arabic speaking and afghan communities.



Launch of Islam Opposes Violence resources

This year we launched the *'Islam and Muslims Oppose Violence Against Women'* booklet, with presentations from the Hon. Ged Kearney, Hon. Gabrielle Williams, Amani Haydar and Sarah Malik. The booklet was developed as a guide for Muslim women and communities to increase awareness and understanding of family violence and early and forced marriage. The booklet aims to educate whole community so that Muslim women are able to live free from the threat of violence. The guide draws on our experiences working with Muslim women over the last 20 years. In order to reach diverse groups within the Australian Muslim community, the booklet has been translated and published in 5 community languages being English, Farsi, Urdu, Arabic and Somali.



(L-R) Tasneem Chopra, Sarah Malik, Amani Haydar, Hon. Gabrielle Williams, Hon. Ged Kearney



Community members at the Islam Opposes Violence launch

Building the sector

Education and Training

This year's training of service providers focused on bringing deeper understanding and appreciation of the diversity of the Muslim population in Australia and their varied practices and beliefs. A series of training workshops were also delivered to facilitate service provider's greater understanding of family violence and the context of early and forced marriages in the Muslim community. In addition, two specialised trainings were delivered to teachers from an Islamic school to support their understanding of the psychosocial, cultural and settlement needs of their migrant students. More than 500 service providers including social workers, lawyers, government officials, council staff, child care providers and other community professionals participated in training delivered across Melbourne.

Feedback from all the sessions indicated that participants gained a deeper appreciation and understanding of the issues related to settlement of Muslim migrant communities, family violence and forced marriage and reflected that they would approach their practice with a more mindful and culturally sensitive lens. Participants reflected that they were able to better understand their own biases and prejudice when working with Muslim clients and identify the risks and long-term impact on the individual and the wider community of this bias.

Collaborative practice

Through the secondary consultation process, AMWCHR was able to support mainstream services to better engage with their Muslim clients, increase awareness of barriers and discrimination as well as support relationship development.

110 secondary consultations were provided via telephone, email and in person to mainstream services including Australian Red Cross, Fitzroy Legal Centre, Foundation House, DHHS, Safe Steps, AMES, regional services and various educational institutions and community organisations.

Some of the issues addressed included settlement challenges, religion and culture, diversity of Muslims, attitudes toward family violence, issues of early and forced marriage, appropriate housing options, supports in court, Islamic marriage and divorce, community support for Muslim families, and appropriate counselling services for Muslim clients.

“I have a greater awareness of cultural issues that impact on taking up services.”

“The workshop was amazing, it gave so much valuable information.”

“This training has increased my understanding of the diversity of Muslim faith and the role of culture to understand family issues.”

“Fantastic detailed raw, real presentation. Excellent workshop.”

Advocacy

Media



AMWCHR Staff at the Whittlesea Wominjeka Welcome Expo 2018

Community language radio

AMWCHR worked closely with several community radio stations such as Radio Nasihat, Radio 98.9, SBS Dari and SBS Turkish, to ensure information about family violence and early and forced marriage was spread to community members more widely. The radio programs were delivered in Arabic, Turkish, Dari and English and explained the concerns and laws around these issues. Listeners were also informed of the resources and services that they could turn to for support and help.

Print media

AMWCHR facilitated four media articles in the last financial year. The articles discussed Inclusion of diverse communities, racism against migrants and minority rights, lack of opportunity for women of colour and cultural colonialism in Australia.

Having a presence in media allows us to interrupt and challenge assumptions as well as take a platform to explore the complex intersections of issues for Muslim community and generate greater understanding of the challenges of settlement and marginalisation.

SBS Life

2 NOV 2018 - 10:13AM

Women of colour don't lack agency or capability, we lack opportunity



IMAGE | VIDEO | AUDIO

"As a seasoned speaker who happens to be a coloured Muslim woman, it has taken me years to establish a public voice in spaces typically dominated by majority Anglo-Australian persons."

Women of colour don't lack agency or capability, we lack opportunity

www.sbs.com.au/topics/life/culture/article/2018/07/12/women-colour-dont-lack-agency-or-capability-we-lack-opportunity

3 AUG 2018 - 3:40PM

Why Gordon Ramsay is no match for my Aunties



IMAGE | VIDEO | AUDIO

The optics of a middle aged white man visiting foreign cultures and foods in order to show them up is a kind of cultural colonialism served light and cold.

By Tasneem Chopra

Tweet

Why Gordon Ramsay is no match for my Aunties

www.sbs.com.au/topics/life/culture/article/2018/08/03/why-gordon-ramsay-no-match-my-aunties

16 AUG 2018 - 11:07AM

Why Fraser Anning is wrong about Muslim Australians



IMAGE | VIDEO | AUDIO

What Fraser Anning doesn't understand is hatemongers will never conquer the resilience and power of our diverse communities.

Why Fraser Anning is wrong about Muslim Australians

www.sbs.com.au/topics/life/culture/article/2018/08/15/why-fraser-anning-wrong-about-muslim-australians

23 AUG 2018 - 5:06PM

The prospect of PM Peter Dutton should be our wake-up call



IMAGE | VIDEO | AUDIO

As a minority in this country, I do not have the luxury of apathy.

The prospect of PM Peter Dutton should be our wake-up call

www.sbs.com.au/topics/life/culture/article/2018/08/23/prospect-pm-peter-dutton-should-be-our-wake-call

Visual media

In the last Financial year, the AMWCHR participated in 11 visual media appearances on ABC, The Drum and Al Jazeera TV.



Advisory committees, networks and consultations

National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, Department of Home Affairs

AMES Australia: HSS Local Area Coordination

Moreland Multicultural and Settlement Services Network

Hume Multicultural Workers Network

North East Region Settlement Planning

Parenting Education Network

Victorian Forced Marriage Network

Whittlesea Settlement Planning Committee

Victoria Police Multicultural Reference Group

Domestic Violence Victoria Members Network Meeting

Family Relationship Centre Cultural Consultative Group

Maribyrnong Workers with Young People's Network

Community Resilience Community of Practice Group, Department of Premier and Cabinet

EQUAL Network

The Harmony Alliance: Migrant and Refugee Women for Change

Forced Marriage Stream Pilot Evaluation Reference Group, Australian Red Cross

Council for Australian Arab Relations, Department of Foreign Affairs

Community Service Panel Victoria, Churchill Fellowship

Special thanks

Our donors

Federal Department of Social Services
Federal Department of Home Affairs
Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet
Victorian Department of Health and Human Services
Victorian Multicultural Commission
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

Our collaborating organisations

3CR Community Radio
Afghan Program SBS Radio
Afghan Women's Association of Victoria
African Women Australia (AWAU)
African Women's Council of Australia (AWCoA)
Anti-Slavery Australia, University of Technology Sydney
Arabic Program SBS Radio
Arabic Welfare Inc
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)
Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH)
Australian International Academy (AIA)
Ballarat Community Health Service
Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council
Barwon CASA
Barwon Child, Youth and Family
Bendigo Health
Benevolence Australia
Broadmeadows English Language School
Brotherhood of St Laurance
Catholic Care Dandenong
Carlisle Primary School Cranbourne
Centrelink
Charles La Trobe P-12 College
Child FIRST (DHS)
Child Protection (DHHS)
Chisholm Institute
City of Darebin
Cohealth North Melbourne
Dandenong North Primary School
Dandenong South Primary School
Dandenong High School
Darebin Community Health Centre (DCH)
Deakin University
Dianella Community Health
Diversitat
East Preston Islamic College (EPIC)
Ethnic Communities Council of Shepparton (ECCV)
Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program (FARREP)
Fawkner Community House
Family Relationship Centre Broadmeadows

Our collaborating organisations

Foundation House
Fountain Gate Secondary College
Gippsland Multicultural Services
Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE (GOTAFE) Shepparton
Halal Food Project
Headspace
Hume Central Secondary College
Hume Interfaith Network
Holmesglen Institute Dandenong
InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)
Islamic College of Melbourne
Kildonan Uniting Care Shepparton
Plenty Valley Community Health
Launch Housing
Lyndale Secondary College
Mallee Family Care (MFC)
Maternal and Child Health Service (through Mildura Rural City Council)
McGuire College
Merri Community Health Services
Mildura English Language Centre
Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH)
Myriad Consulting
Narre Warren South P-12 College
Neami National
Newbury Child and Community Centre
New Hope Foundation
Noble Park English Language School
North Geelong Secondary College
Northern Community Legal Centre
Northern Bay College
NSW Department of Family and Community Services
Orygen Youth Health
Pascoe Vale Girls College
Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health
Reach Foundation
River Nile Learning Centre
Rise Refugee
Royal Women's Hospital
Salvation Army
Stand Up
Settlement Council of Australia
Sirius College
Springvale Rise Primary School
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) Broadmeadows
Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC)
TAFE Mildura
Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG)
Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC)
Women's Health West
Women's Legal Service Victoria
Yarra Community Housing

Income and Expenditure Statement for the year ended 30 June 2019

Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights Inc. ABN 57 347 235 363

	2019	2018
	\$	\$
Income		
Grant income	1,527,862	1,279,214
Interest received	9,903	4,419
Management fees	102,177	119,505
Other income	22,763	9,901
Total Income	1,662,705	1,413,039
Expenditure		
Depreciation and amortisation expense	3,884	1,405
Finance, audit and accounting fees	35,212	37,409
Insurance	7,555	7,427
Office overheads	26,428	26,252
Premises expenses	104,201	57,924
Programming and planning	314,183	421,964
Staff related expenses	34,620	27,723
Staff salaries, wages and on-costs	1,077,893	783,343
	1,603,976	1,363,447
Total Expenditure	1,603,976	1,363,447
Net surplus/(deficit) attributable to the association	58,729	49,592

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2019

Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights Inc. ABN 57 347 235 363

	2019	2018
	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents		
Cash at bank	538,764	933,873
Term deposit	513,756	269,973
	1,052,520	1,203,846
Trade and Other Receivables		
Accounts receivable	27,500	27,500
Prepayments	4,397	34,198
Security bond	17,174	17,153
	49,071	78,851
Total Current Assets	1,101,591	1,282,697
Non-Current Assets		
Property, Plant and Equipment		
Office equipment - at cost	27,840	23,494
Less: provision for depreciation	(16,858)	(12,973)
	10,982	10,521
Total Non-Current Assets	10,982	10,521
Total Assets	1,112,573	1,293,218

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2019

Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights Inc. ABN 57 347 235 363

	2019	2018
	\$	\$
Current Liabilities		
Trade and Other Payable		
Accounts payable	107,807	123,934
Accrued expenses	48,243	9,306
GST payable	(1,772)	(3,320)
Superannuation payable	–	20,809
	154,278	150,729
Deferred Income		
Grants received in advance	430,416	636,584
	430,416	636,584
Employment Entitlement Provisions		
Provision for annual leave	53,453	69,443
Provision for long service leave	38,437	51,028
Provision for time in lieu	6,627	14,801
	98,517	135,272
Total Current Liabilities	683,211	922,585
Non-Current Liabilities		
Employment Entitlement Provisions		
Provision for long service leave	–	–
Total Non-Current Liabilities	–	–
Total Liabilities	683,211	922,585
Net Assets	429,362	370,633
Equity		
Accumulated members funds	429,362	370,633
	429,362	370,633

The financial information contained in this annual report has been extracted from the Association's statutory financial report for the year ended 30 June 2019 as audited by Collins & Co.

A copy of the full statutory accounts is available upon request to AMWCHR.

Statement by members of the board

Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights Inc. ABN 57 347 235 363

The Board has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the Board the financial report as set out on pages 2 to 9:

- 1 Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights Inc. as at 30 June 2019 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
- 2 At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board and is signed for and on behalf of the Board by:

Chairperson



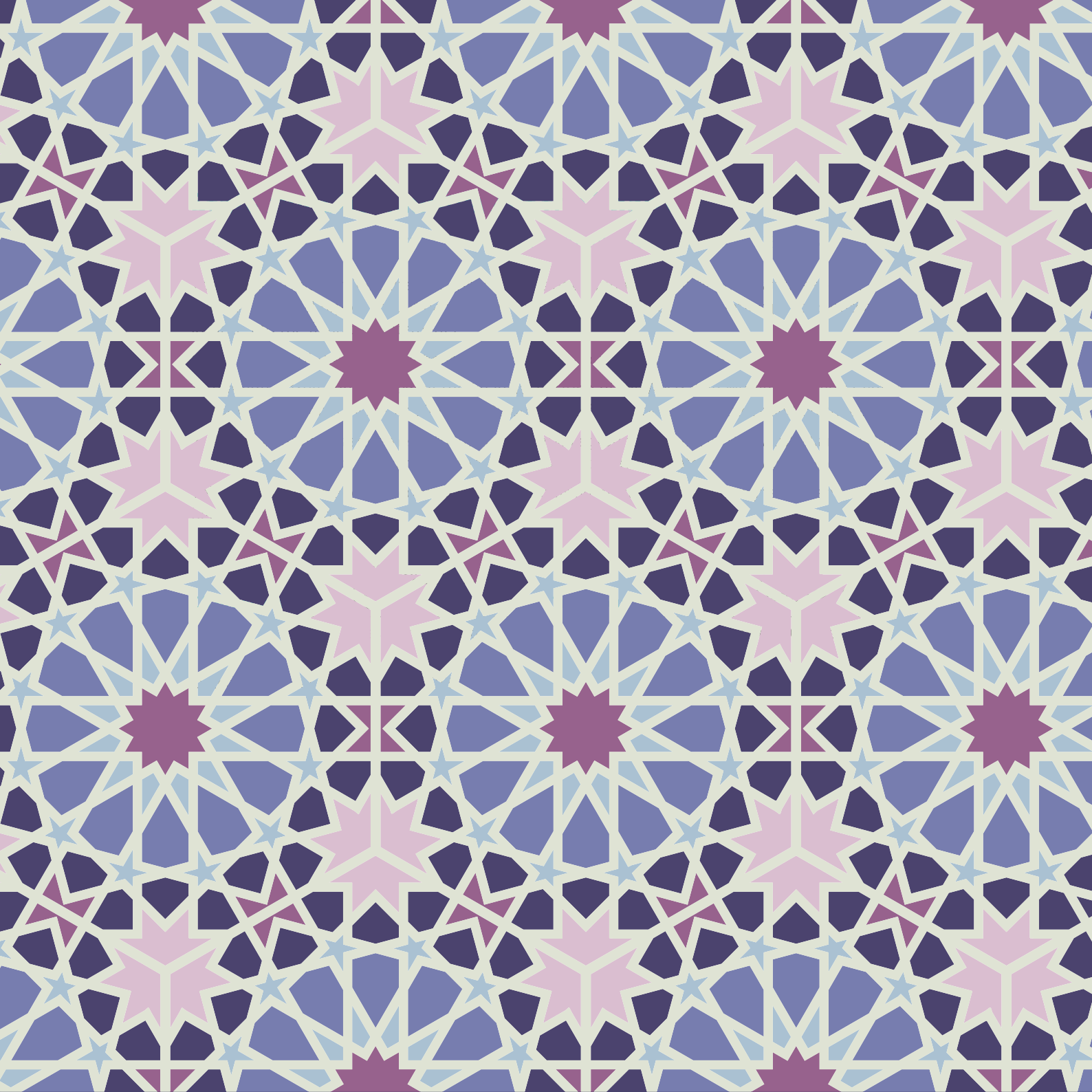
Tasneem Chopra

Treasurer



Rasheeda Cooper

Dated this 27 day of November 2018



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

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