

2014 annual report



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

Published by:

**Australian Muslim Women's Centre for
Human Rights**

Telephone: (03) 9481 3000

Facsimile: (03) 9481 3001

Email: reception@muslimwomenscentre.org.au

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ISBN 978-0-9872963-8-2

Designed by: Savanah Design Pty Ltd



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Current Staff

Joumanah El Matrah
Executive Director

Dr. Nuzhat Lotia
Manager

Heidi Abdel Raouf
Casework Supervisor

Gabrielle Fakhri
*Sector Development and Capacity
Building Project Worker*

Jaweria Khalid
Women's Groupwork Settlement Worker

Dr. Asha Bedar
Research, Training & Development Worker

Ambreen Mirza
Leadership Education & Training Worker

Alexandra Mifta Russ
Young Women's Worker and Caseworker

Anila Aftab
Research Officer

Ferial Gleadous
Office Manager

Clare Van Balen
Research Assistant and Executive Assistant

Executive Committee

Tasneem Chopra
Chairperson

Fazila Hajeb
Vice Chairperson

Rasheeda Cooper
Treasurer

Hena Kalam
Secretary

Committee Members

Anisa Buckley

Sarah Malik

Yasmin Khan

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About Us

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 to better 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 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 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.

Our Strategic Intent

The Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (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

From the Chairperson and Executive Director

This year has been a dynamic and expansive one for the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights. We have ventured into new fields of women's health, media representation, and communal tensions in Australia following the conflict in Syria. While tackling these new areas, we have also remained strong in our traditional areas of direct service provision to Muslim women and their children, and consultancy and training for the community welfare sector.

As always, the AMWCHR has been very industrious. This year we provided services to 3,178 Muslim women and community sector professionals across Australia. Our work with women continues through information provision in workshops and through leadership and capacity building in groupwork sessions. We also provide one-to-one support for women requiring assistance in matters relating to homelessness, poverty, immigration and settlement, and family violence. And, in addition to this, we have continued to advocate on the behalf of Muslim women and to develop resources to increase awareness of their needs and improve service provision to them.

We have continued to work at the state, national and international levels.

At the state level we have undertaken work in Swan Hill, Mildura, Shepparton and Geelong in addition our usual work in Melbourne.

At the national level, we have undertaken research, advocacy, contributed to policy development, participated in advisory groups and undertaken media work on migrant and Muslim women. The AMWCHR hosted a roundtable on the civil and religious process of marriage and divorce for Muslim women living in Australia. We also held consultations nationally with affected communities, community leaders and relevant experts on media representation of female genital cutting. While the AMWCHR has a long established history of working with the media, work on the health issue of female genital cutting and

its representation in the media is new for us. It was a great honour to work with our fellow sister activists from the affected communities, and also with the wonderful professionals working in the women's health sector and the media. We have also continued to participate in the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery hosted by the Australian Attorney-General's Department. The AMWCHR received a special mention in Parliament by the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator Michaelia Cash for the publication *Working with Muslim Women on the Effects of Family Violence and Child Sexual Abuse on Children*, the launch of which is featured in this report.

Our international work has continued to focus on the impact of the Syrian conflict and more recently on Islamic State's incursion into Iraq. Both these conflicts placed considerable pressure on intra-Muslim community relations in Australia. We have continued to work intensively in this area, supporting young people and community leaders to meet the newly emerging challenges. We have provided training to mainstream services to assist them to fully understand the impact of the Syrian and Iraqi crises on Muslim lives in Australia. The conflict in Syria has created a humanitarian catastrophe with now an estimated 9 million refugees displaced, approximately 4 million of whom are outside Syria in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey. While many countries have pledged assistance and offered asylum, Australia included, it is yet to meet the vast need engendered by the crisis.

This year we have found ourselves yet again, facing the impact of racism and prejudice on women's lives. Our work on media representations of female genital cutting demonstrated that the practice continues to be represented in a manner that often misrepresents women's experiences, sensationalises the issue, demeans practicing communities, and ignores the complex political and social context of the practice. The rise of Islamic State particularly in Iraq has also given rise to issues of racism with an increasing



Joumanah at the 4th National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery hosted by The Hon Michael Keenan Minister for Justice and attended by The Hon Julie Bishop MP.

number of incidents of racist abuse and violence, making women and young people feel unsafe in their day-to-day lives.

In the face of these challenges, AMWCHR continues to take heart in the community connections and professional partnerships that we have built and strengthened throughout the year. Fundamental to all our work, are the partnerships we develop with other organisations in the community sector, the community leaders who assist us to undertake our work and the volunteers who kindly give us their time.

Additionally, we would like to give thanks to our donors, without whom very little would be possible. We are grateful to the Department of Social Services, the Attorney-General's Department, the

Victorian Department of Communities, the Scanlon Foundation and the Australian Government's Department of Health.

Most importantly, a big thanks to our wonderful staff and committee of management for their amazing work. Their commitment to the AMWCHR, and to social justice in general, is commendable. They are a highly professional and driven team that always achieves the very best for the women we serve.

Congratulations to the staff and committee on an amazing year.

Tasneem Chopra
Chairperson

Joumanah El Matrah
Executive Director

Forging
strong social
networks

Service users: 122

Empowering
women towards
self-reliance and
independence

Service users: 2,503

Transforming
community
leadership

Service users: 972

Our
numbers for
2013-14

1,965 services delivered
3,178 community
members and organisations
who accessed our
services

Building safer
communities for
women

Service users: 105

Reaching out
through media
publications and
community events

Service users: 427

Supporting
others in service
delivery

Secondary consultations:
125

Bringing
a community
perspective through
community
consultations

Service users: 341

CORE PROGRAMS

SILC: Cornerstones

The AMWCHR's SILC program builds the capacity of Muslim women to be self-aware and confident and to exercise agency over their lives as women, parents and partners. Ultimately, the SILC program seeks to build the capacity of Muslim women to be active members of the Australian community.

SILC's Cornerstones project, funded by the Department of Social Services, works with women from both newly arrived and established communities in Victoria. This year a total of 121 women participated in groupwork sessions, including women from Afghan, Persian, Oromo, Turkish and Arabic backgrounds. Our work with women primarily focused on their capacity to build and maintain healthy family relationships, parent effectively and to resolve conflict within the family in healthy ways.

We delivered our capacity building training sessions with women mainly in Melbourne's south-eastern and northern regions, working collaboratively with schools such as Roxburgh College, Coolaroo South Primary and Dandenong South Primary, and community organisations such as New Hope Foundation, Oromo Community Women's Group and Berry Street.

Participant feedback suggests that the SILC programs are greatly valued by Muslim women who otherwise have limited access to supports to help them contend with the many challenges they face. Specific feedback from participants about what they found valuable about the program included:

"This program helped me communicate with my family. You taught us how to communicate."

"I learned how to make rules for my grandchildren. I encouraged them to take turns sitting in the front seat with me and it actually worked."

"I learned how to be more assertive with my kids. I explain more to them and they listen more."

"I shared the rules of feedback with my husband and he was listening to me, and I already see a difference."

"This program taught me to think of my family's issues as "our" issues, not just mine. Before my kids and I wouldn't talk and everyone would just go into their room and sit on their laptops, but this program helped me make a turning point. I called my kids to talk and I used "we" when talking about the conflicts, since this affects all of us. After the talk they are not just locked in their room with their laptop."

"My friend asked me, how do you know all these things? I told her I learned them from this program, and I really enjoy it a lot."

"After attending the communication session I learned how to give my son feedback without getting angry and used positive feedback, and he listened to me and continues to do so. I even heard him giving feedback in the same way to his friend!"

"I felt very powerful after the session on power and realised that I have more power than I think."

"I applied the power session to my relationship with my husband and felt more powerful in my relationship than before."

CORE PROGRAMS

Settlement Grants Program

Working with Women – Consultations with the Community

As part of the Settlement Grants Program, consultations are conducted with newly-arrived women. The consultations introduce the organisation to women and identify current issues and settlement related concerns that women may have. This understanding of women's most pressing needs informs how the AMWCHR subsequently designs programs.

This year, our consultations with Muslim women were held in Swan Hill, Mildura, Shepparton and across the different regions of Melbourne. These consultations led to useful discussions of issues faced by newly-arrived Muslim women in Victoria. Muslim women described significant difficulty with issues such as poverty and housing, migration, access to English language classes, accessing employment opportunities, accessing childcare, isolation, health and wellbeing issues, and violence in the home.

The challenges for Muslim women continue to be considerable.

Parenting Program

Care and parenting of children is a significant challenge for many of the women who migrate to Australia. We find that newly-arrived Muslim women need consistent support with parenting as there can be radically different cultural requirements of them as parents within their country of origin and Australia.

The parenting program works closely with newly-arrived women to assist women in their own settlement process and how they themselves support their children through the settlement process. The

program does this through training workshops on parenting. The training provides a space where women can voice their concerns and raise issues, and further receive guidance and skill development to understand the impact of settlement on their children and the different skills required to parent in the Australian context. A number of women report facing challenges related to schooling, cross-cultural differences, difficulties in understanding developmental change in their children, and parenting responsibilities in the Australian context.

In the last year, the parenting program has worked with 590 number of women in collaboration with schools and community organisations around Victoria. The workshops were conducted in Shepparton in collaboration with TAFE, in Hampton Park with Rivergum Primary School, in Dandenong with Dandenong North Primary and at Dandenong South Primary School with Berry Street Play Group.

After attending the parenting session, women felt more confident in raising children in a new culture, particularly in relation to appropriate child disciplining. Also, participation in sessions added to women's knowledge and understanding of mainstream services, such as children's health, homework programs, and parenting assistance.

Our work in Shepparton focused on newly-arrived women who had only been in Australia for a few months. Upon completion of our groupwork sessions, women expressed that they had a better understanding of the school system in Australia and how they can support their children in their settlement. Through the sessions, women, some of whom were very isolated, began to develop friendships. They reported that by the second day of training they were already visiting each other's houses, demonstrating increased interaction within their community. The forming of social support networks we believe is an important outcome of our work because it significantly improves women's wellbeing and improves the settlement experience for women.

The women who attended the Hampton Park and Dandenong South parenting sessions developed

skills in making family rules and setting boundaries, and learnt the benefits of such rules in effective parenting in the Australian context. In both groups participants reported feeling more confident about using appropriate and positive methods of discipline and had learnt, not only about the Australian law relating to physical punishment, but also how it affects children's well-being. Mothers were able to appreciate the need for reflecting on the purpose and aim of disciplining children and use these reflections to guide their decision-making.

Group participants were grateful to learn about the importance of spending quality time with their children. Women consistently raised concerns that their children would either lose or forget their culture and values. Thus, the idea that effective relationships with children helps ensure children learn and participate in cultural activities was very important to women. They also shared that they were now confident about accessing mainstream parenting services.

Some of the women attending the groups also accessed our casework service for support, this included clients in Mildura and Shepparton as well as metropolitan Melbourne.

Information Sessions

Aside from workshops that focus specifically on parenting issues and skills, the settlement program also provides one-off information sessions for newly-arrived women on a variety of topics that may be of relevance and interest to them. This year, such topics included life skills, legal issues, health, financial management and education.

In the last year, two sessions were held on women's health with a focus on breast screening and Pap tests. These sessions increased participants' knowledge and understanding of the importance of regular preventative health checks and examinations. At the request of participants, additional sessions on different aspects of health were also held. Women reported feeling that they lack important information about their own and their daughters' health, as

they often feel too shy to ask questions of their GPs who are usually male. A further hurdle for women is having to ask doctors difficult questions through an interpreter. Many women find that information sessions provided by other women in an all female environment is a safe and comfortable space to learn. Participants gained information about relevant services they could access and, furthermore, the interactive nature of the sessions meant that women were able to share their knowledge of female doctors in the area that spoke their language.

An information session provided by the Deafness Foundation on Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) increased women's understanding of MMR immunisation and the benefits of child immunisation. Many women were not sure if their children had received MMR immunisation and they were encouraged to talk to their GPs to find out. Sometimes when children were immunised by their GPs women were not informed or did not fully understand what the immunisation was for. Another point raised was GPs' lack of awareness of the free-of-charge immunisation system. Not only was the session very useful in providing information, the interactive nature of the session led to a rich discussion of the specific issues that women faced.

Information sessions in Mildura focused on diabetes education and prevention. The session allowed women to ask questions about diet and exercise and the link between lifestyle and diabetes. They learnt about food groups and healthy eating. They were informed about the possibility of making appointments with the Sunraysia Mallee Community Health Service's dietician and other available services in relation to health issues of concern.

Other information sessions focused on communication between families and children, communication skills and parenting in a new culture, law/family matters and filling out school forms. Participants were able to receive practical information on the topics of their interest/needs as well as details of legal, parenting and family support services available in their local areas to assist them and their children.

Overall, the information provided in sessions contributed to the capacity of clients to be independent and to solve their health-related problems, and parenting and family issues. The sessions gave women the confidence to approach and access services and supports to further enhance their and their children's well-being. The interactive, experiential style of the sessions provided emotional support and helped build social connections amongst participants who at times were extremely isolated.

Parenting Conference

This year, our annual parenting conference was held at Dandenong South Primary School for newly-arrived Muslim mothers. We would like to thank the school for generously providing the space for the conference. Approximately 70 women attended the conference to learn parenting skills and to share their experiences with each other. In addition, 35 children were looked after by childcare workers organised by the AMWCHR. Women attending the conference were mothers of children attending Dandenong West Primary School, Dandenong North Primary School and Dandenong South Primary School. The conference was a very successful event of collaboration between schools and agencies facilitated by the AMWCHR.

Pat Jewel, an expert in early childhood development and parenting from The Australian Childhood Foundation, started the conference with a plenary session. She talked to the mothers about the growing child's brain and how this development is related to a child's behaviour.

The plenary was followed by four concurrent workshops on parenting skills (interpreters were provided in all workshops):

- **Cross-cultural Parenting – Challenges and Opportunities** – this workshop covered cultural differences in parenting, understanding parenting roles in Australia, and ways to improve communication with your children (provided by The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House))
- **Why Women's Health? – Parenting Focus** – this workshop asked women to see health and illness as broader than the physical domain, to consider the range of factors which can impact on their overall health status and to look at their health with a specific parenting focus in mind (provided by Women's Health in the South East (WHISE))
- **Good nutrition for children** – this workshop was on healthy eating and dental health care to help parents understand good nutrition for children and obesity prevention (provided by Dandenong Maternal & Child Health Service)
- **Connecting with children – Where do I come from ... Where are we going?** This workshop discussed myths about parenting, communication with children, and how to keep your cool with children (provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation)

The information on brain development and children's behaviour was particularly welcomed and valued by conference participants with mothers stating they had little to no understanding or information about it prior to the presentation. Women took home brochures and lists of local organisations that were provided on the day about where they can access help and support.

Case Work Services

The AMWCHR's casework services provide comprehensive support for Muslim women experiencing a wide range of issues.

This past year a total of 1,541 women contacted AMWCHR with a range of issues including: domestic violence, homelessness, poverty, immigration concerns, mental health issues, child protection concerns, and needs relating to education and employment.

Clients that accessed our casework services reported increasing their knowledge and confidence to navigate and access mainstream support services such as Centrelink, the Department of Housing and Job Services Australia. Women's confidence to access mainstream services increased their independence and improved their well-being and integration into their communities. Outcomes for women who accessed our casework support services included improved problem solving skills and life skills, and enhanced self reliance and resourcefulness.

Examples of specific client outcomes from women accessing our casework services included:

- With casework support a homeless, young Afghan single mother proactively found secure housing by independently approaching housing services and persisting until she eventually secured public housing.
- An Eritrean single mother learning English to build a new life in Australia required public transport assistance to access her local children's hospital. After working with the AMWHRC's caseworker, she can now travel independently around Melbourne, represent herself at the hospital and manage her affairs.
- An Iranian woman who experienced domestic violence from her husband now knows what her rights and options are, as well as services available to her should she decide to leave her husband with her two children.

- An isolated Libyan woman who felt disconnected from her community approached the AMWCHR. We connected her to an Arabic Women's social support group where members of the group share knowledge with each other on matters such as applying for Australian citizenship. The client reported that she felt comforted by the support she received from the group.

Young Women's Program

For the Young Women's Program, 2014 has been another year of engagement with bright young women from a broad range of schools and cultural backgrounds. Women from Middle Eastern, African, Afghan, South Asian and Turkish communities participated in sessions and programs delivered across metropolitan Melbourne, Melbourne's southern suburbs and Shepparton. The Young Women's Program was also excited to resume services in the north of Melbourne.

The Young Women's Program took time creating new relationships with schools and re-establishing a presence in the Hume area. We ran a number of successful programs and sessions at Reservoir High School and Hume Central's junior and senior campuses. We also began a fruitful collaboration with the New Hope Foundation to deliver programs to young women from Oromo and Somali communities living in and around the Yarra City area.

As always our programs have focused on building self awareness in young women and awareness of the broader influences that shape their lives, such as issues within their community, broader Australian society, and gender and power politics. The program was delivered whilst also addressing fundamental settlement needs such as health and mental health strategies and services, education supports and pathways, leadership skills, and access to role models from the Muslim community.

We have found key topics that support young women experiencing the transition from girlhood to young adulthood are healthy self-esteem and relationships.

During sessions we explored the many forms and identifiers of healthy and unhealthy ways of being in relation to self and others, the difficulties young women experience asserting their rights and needs when they are not compatible with their country of origin's cultural norms. Within the arena of mental health we explored the intercultural collision that many women experience around their body and their changing roles as young women in their family and social settings. All these areas are also heavily impacted by culture, the process of settlement and adolescence.

Notably, we worked intensively with a group of young Afghan women at Lyndale Secondary College to develop their leadership skills and to support the development of their Peer Support Program, a program initiated by the young women the year before in a peer support session run by the Young Women's Program. Over the year this group of enterprising young women delivered an information session to the local English Language School, advised the school council on a variety of issues including uniform standards and started up a revised buddy system for new students arriving to Lyndale from the local English Language School. Part of this system was the development of a new student pack that included a teacher directory and student-designed maps of the school.

In our highly successful Peer Support Sessions young women met real-life role models to discuss questions about personal and professional choices. Role models with experiences of migration and negotiating intercultural life provided young women with broad reference points on identity, education, career and personal motivations. A significant theme in these sessions for young women was the challenge of finding a personal passion in one's life to contribute socially and/or professionally.

The issues we hear about most impacting young Muslim women are those of gender inequality, racism, social stigma, poverty and educational challenges. Young women who attended schools where there are strong and established Muslim and/or ethno-specific communities were often able to tap into a growing sense of security and social standing. This was reflected in young women's ability to deeply discuss experiences that explored gender and social activism, which is enormously encouraging, as it allows young women to explore the complex nature of culture, gender and self-determination for themselves. During a leadership program at Narre Warren South P-12, the facilitators felt in awe of our young participants as they passionately debated issues of Australian political parties and their policies as well as the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

For young Muslim women who attend schools where they are in a clear minority or perhaps who have become disconnected from their peers and cultural contexts, isolation can be a debilitating experience that is not easily shifted without the ongoing support of services.

Our programs aim to accommodate and support the full spectrum of migration and settlement experiences. We ensure that our programs address the full spectrum of these experiences by performing individual consultations, which are then used to inform the delivery of our sessions and groups.

The Young Women's Program provides a wonderful and challenging arena for meeting young Muslim women from around Victoria. We find the work undertaken by these young women in self-reflection and self-development inspiring and educative, and to have a powerful impact on their families and communities.

DEVELOPING NEW APPROACHES

Speaking Across the Sectarian Divide

In 2013, AMWCHR received funding from the Australian Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Social Services. The funding aimed to develop the leadership capacity of young people from Muslim minorities, to facilitate the capacity of Muslim minorities to engage with the Muslim majority community in Victoria and to create an opportunity for dialogue between young people from different communities.

The project developed in the context of the Syrian civil conflict and its increasing impact on the welfare of Australian Muslim youth. Following a small number of threats and minor incidents, the AMWCHR and community leaders formed a working group to address the rise in sectarian tensions and to develop strategies for maintaining community goodwill and safety. The working group identified the need to work with youth communities around inter-sectarian tensions.

With this in mind, the AMWCHR worked directly with youth communities affected by the Syrian crisis, including Alevi, Alawite, and Sunni youth, to increase their leadership capacity and communication skills with the specific goal of developing a platform for dialogue between different groups.

A total of 86 young people participated in the leadership training, with 57 participants completing the course.

The initial Alawite leadership group was instrumental in creating a new space for young Muslim Alawites who, until then, had not come together as a group. Upon completion of our training program, they organised an information night to share their experiences of the leadership course and to induct new participants into the training. The information night received a very good response and the AMWCHR was able to organise a second round of leadership training.



The Hon Mark Dreyfus MP Attorney-General 2013, officially launching the Speaking Across the Sectarian Divide project.

Alongside the trainings with the Alawite youth, the AMWCHR also conducted leadership workshops with Sunni youth through two schools in Melbourne's north, namely the East Preston Islamic College (EPIC) and the Australian International Academy (AIA). The sessions were held weekly over an eight-week period. An intensive leadership course was run with Alevi youth over three days with the assistance of the Kurdish Association.

To measure the effectiveness of the project, the AMWCHR has employed the services of an external evaluator. Thus far, the feedback received has been extremely positive, with young participants reporting that the course increased their understanding of good leadership, human rights and responsibilities, and assertive communication. The final evaluation results are expected in December 2014.

Aside from directly engaging with youth in the community, the project also aimed to strengthen community and government institutions to develop a better understanding of the Syrian crisis, its religious

links, and its impact on Muslims in Victoria. The AMWCHR hosted a number of activities, which include trainings with Victoria Police and service providers, a forum with community leaders to discuss the impact of the Syrian and Iraqi crises on

Australian Muslims, as well as a dialogue night which brought together participants from the leadership trainings as well as prominent members of the community to discuss their experiences and the way forward.



The Hon David Feeney MP, the Hon Mark Dreyfus MP Attorney-General in 2013, University of Melbourne Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, ICV General Manager Nail Aykan and Sheikh Isa Ibrahim.



Young Alawite leaders together with prominent Alawite imams.

Alawite Information Night

One significant highlight of our work with Alawite youth was an information night organised and run by young Alawite community leaders. This event was a major achievement for the young Alawites who brought together imams and elders from their community and presented to them on community issues that were important to young people.

This important night represented the hard work put in by the young people throughout 6 additional leadership training sessions that were made possible by support from Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC). This additional leadership training occurred in the context of the Syrian crisis and focused on developing collective capacity to contribute to youth development within the Alawite community. The sessions were practical in nature



Alawite leadership training graduate, Majdoline Hassan, speaks at the Childaware Launch.

with the aim of organising the event. The training was therefore around event planning, public speaking and event review and evaluation. The group found this hands-on approach to training and development very useful and engaging.

Following the information night there was a significant interest in future AMWCHR leadership training from other young community members. This is testament to the success of AMWCHR's training sessions and the leadership abilities of the Alawite young people.



Graduates from the Alawite training program



The Australian Muslim Women's
Centre for Human Rights

working with
Muslim women
on the effects of
family and
community violence

Tasneem Chopra opening the launch of the Childaware guide.

Childaware Launch

In June 2013, we launched *Working with Muslim Women on the Effects of Family Violence and Child Sexual Abuse on Children* (Childaware guide). The Childaware guide is a resource guide to support community workers and other professionals working with Muslim women on issues of family violence and child abuse. The guide provides an overview of Islam, the affects of migration on the family unit, the cultural context for women and children's role within and experience of the family, and strategies for workers seeking to work with Muslim women on the impact of family violence and child sexual abuse on children.

The Hon Senator Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women launched our Guide with community leaders Faride Bezhani and Majdoline Hassan and the Hon. Andrea Coote MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Community Services. The event commenced with a moving presentation by spoken word poet, Abe Nouk, on the impact of violence on women's lives. Over 120 of our valued colleagues and community women joined us to celebrate the culmination of the year's work. The publication received national coverage through *The Australian* newspaper.



The Hon Michaelia Cash launching the Childaware guide.



Women and staff come together for the launch of the Childaware guide.



Joumanah El Matrah providing an overview of the Childaware guide.



Faride Bezhani sharing the challenges of Afghan women in Australia.



Tasneem Chopra, Chief Justice Diana Bryant AO QC, Andrea Coote MP and Joumanah El Matrah at the Childaware guide launch.



Abe Nouk giving a powerful presentation on the affects of family violence on women.

SMALL PROJECTS

Community Lunch and Meeting for Refugee Muslim Women

With funding from the Greater Dandenong Community Support Grants Program, the AMWCHR organised a community lunch and meeting for approximately 80 refugee Muslim women in June. The lunch brought migrant and refugee Muslim women together to develop networks and to have fun while at the same time gaining information and discussing common community issues. The lunch represented for many Muslim women a rare opportunity to participate in a social and educational event.

The event was attended by the Mayor of the City of Greater Dandenong and the principal of Dandenong South Primary School, as well as representatives from Dandenong North and Dandenong West Primary Schools, and was a heartening example of partnership between the AMWCHR and primary schools in the area.

Building women's capacity

With financial help from the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC), the AMWCHR continued to empower Muslim women and build their capacity to deal with issues associated with settling and integrating into Australian society. This work involved working directly with Muslim women by providing casework support, parenting groupwork sessions, and settlement support with newly-arrived women to discuss issues of identity, conflict and communication, leadership and skills development, as well as working with organisations by providing secondary consultation and training, and event coordination. All our work aimed at building the capacity of individuals and the community within some of the most disadvantaged groups in Victoria - Muslim women.

Respectful Dialogue

The AMWCHR developed the very first media resource on Female Genital Cutting (FGC) in Australia, through funding provided by the Federal Department of Health. *Respectful Dialogue: A guide to responsible reporting on Female Genital Cutting* provides introductory information on FGC, information on services available and contacts for media professionals seeking to develop a story on FGC. The guide also provides recommendations and advice on the development of a story on FGC and how media professionals might respectfully approach communities in their development of a media piece.

Designed to equip journalists and media professionals with an increased understanding of the practice in Australia, the media resource guide promotes respectful reporting that does not sensationalise the practice or demean women affected by it. Ultimately, the guide was written to support media professionals to avoid alienating, stigmatising or racialising affected communities.

Respectful Dialogue was developed in consultation with women from affected communities themselves, community workers, health workers, legal professionals and media professionals. This was achieved through extensive interviews and focus groups carried out in several major cities across Australia. Focus groups were held with 45 professionals in the community welfare sector in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide. This was complemented by 11 interviews with professionals working with women from affected communities, health professionals and journalists to determine the guide's content and structure. Importantly, 83 women from Somali, Eritrean, Kenyan, Congolese, Ghanaian, Sierra Leonean, Liberian and Tanzanian backgrounds were consulted during the research phase of the project.

Additionally, support from VMC made possible leadership sessions for 35 participants from Oromo, Lebanese, Syrian, Turkish, Indian and Somali backgrounds.

At Coolaroo South Primary School, three mothers' groups focusing on women's leadership were run. Their overall purpose was to develop an awareness of women's social situations and increase their capacity to support other mothers within the school.

Three parenting groups were also run for Turkish mothers at Roxburgh College. Topics covered included improving communication, self-awareness, understanding power dynamics, learning about different types of behaviours and conflict resolution. Feedback was positive and women reported feeling they could, not only try their newly learnt skills at home, but also offer guidance to other women in their communities.

Three sessions were run for the Oromo Young Women's Group for newly arrived young women. The focus of these sessions was to build leadership capacity, learn about the qualities of a leader, develop self awareness and learn about their community to see what issues need to be worked on at the community level. Other benefits to these sessions were that women could build relationships that are useful for future work within their community.

Education sessions on violence against women and their children

Through support from the Scanlon Foundation, the AMWCHR delivered 12 community-based sessions on the different forms of family violence and its impact on women, children and communities. The sessions focused on educating women about different forms of family violence, how violence operates in the family context, its impacts on children, women and entire communities, and services available for women. Discussions took place in the context of Islam's anti-violence principles, with emphasis on violence never being acceptable.

The sessions held in Coolaroo and Dandenong managed to attract 105 women from all across Melbourne. Women who attended lived in Coburg, Broadmeadows, Glenroy, Dandenong, Noble Park, Springvale, Narre Warren and Hampton Park and were from various backgrounds including Lebanese, Turkish, Afghan and Iranian.

The sessions were greatly successful, receiving positive feedback from participants. Women reported that they wanted to talk a lot more with her children about these issues and others stated that they felt more confident about their knowledge of the law and the services available to them. All the women said that they would recommend the sessions to other women in their communities.

Services provided

Individual support to women	1541
Secondary consultations	125
Group work sessions	67
Participants	560
Peer support sessions	11
Participants	122
Leadership workshop sessions	100
Participants	972
Education/trainings/presentations	12
Participants	341
Community consultations	29
Participants	260
Information sessions	17
Participants	282
Study skills sessions	10
Participants	120
Family violence training for community women	12
Participants	105
Community events	5
Participants	416
Radio Programs (including community languages)	5
Networking meetings	30
Publications	1

Media Interviews/ Articles



Illustration: El Matrah of the Australian Women's Centre for Human Rights says "the persecution of religious or ... used to target women and children". Picture: Stuart McEvoy Source: News Corp Australia

AUSTRALIAN Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights executive director Jomannah El Matrah says people often assume language is the most significant obstacle when working with women from immigrant backgrounds on issues of domestic violence.

"In fact the difference is more around what has happened to women before they've got here," she said, launching a guide to "Working with Muslim women on the effects of domestic violence and child sexual abuse" at the new Islamic Museum of Australia. She said that culture and religion on religious understandings have worked to entrench against women and children.

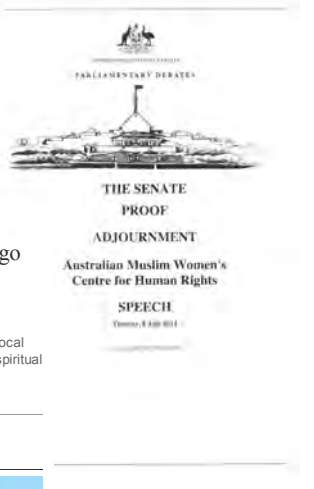
"Therefore the eradication of violence against us cultural and religious context of women's lives.

"Families are also not immune to the manipulation and domination.

"It is important to note in these contexts the perv women and children."

Melbourne Hazara community leader Farida Bob content of the guide, spoke of having to overcome the house, let alone driving, learning English or

She said combining services with schooling and women's groups with their mothers-in-law were



Would growing up in Bendigo have been different with a mosque?

I had a typical upbringing in Bendigo: bush dances, netball, and singing hymns at the local school. There was no hate; just a missed spiritual connection that is now being addressed

Lawson Chapp
bendigo.com Tuesday 24 June 2014 09:44 AEST
www.incomments.com



'Local Muslims in Bendigo are seeking a space to meet their spiritual needs.' Photograph: Bendigo Trust/AAP

My favourite memories during my 1980s upbringing in Bendigo were yabby catching, bush dancing, netball and The Brady Bunch. So much of who I am today as an adult, working professional and Australian, stems from my time in that country town with its predominantly Anglo-Saxon population.

Not surprisingly, the shrill tone of this recent "No mosque in Bendigo" campaign, deeply embedded in

Advisory Committees and Networks

1. Our Voices – Filling the Gap, African Women Australia
2. The National Education Toolkit for Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Australia, Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
3. Rite of Passage, African Women's Council of Australia
4. Trafficking – Communications and Awareness Working Group, Australian Attorney General's Department
5. National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, Australian Government
6. Advisory Committee, PNG Family and Sexual Violence Case Management Centre
7. Dandenong Parenting Network
8. Darebin Ethnic Community Council
9. Department of Social Services 10. Multicultural Action Committee
10. Goulburn Valley Immigration Settlement Planning Committee
11. Hume Multicultural Workers Network
12. Inner West Settlement Planning Committee
13. North East Region Settlement Planning Committee
14. Parenting Education Network
15. South East Region Settlement Planning Committee
16. Whittlesea Settlement Planning Committee

Special thanks

Our donors

Australian Attorney-General's Department
Australian Government Department of Health
City of Greater Dandenong
Department of Social Services (DSS)
Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (now DSS)

FaHCSIA (now DSS)
Scanlon Foundation
Victoria Department of Communities
Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC)

Our collaborating organisations

Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities
Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES)
Afghan Program SBS Radio
African Women Australia (AWAU)
African Women's Council of Australia (AWCoA)
Allens Arthur Robinsons
Anti-Slavery Australia, University of Technology
Arabic Program SBS Radio
Arabic Welfare Inc.
Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH)
Australian Federal Police (AFP)
Australian International Academy (AIA)
Centrelink
Child FIRST (DHS)
City of Darebin
Coolaroo South Primary School
Dandenong South Primary School
Darebin Community Health Centre (DCH)
East Preston Islamic College (EPIC)
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV)
Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District
Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program (FARREP)
Family Day Care service (through Mildura Rural City Council)
Free Debates
GO TAFE Shepparton
Herbert Smith Freehills
Hume Interfaith Network
Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)
Islamic Museum of Australia

Kurdish Association of Victoria
Mallee Family Care (MFC)
Maternal and Child Health service (through Mildura Rural City Council)
Media and Communications, University of Wollongong
Men's Health Project Austin Hospital
Mildura English Language Centre
Mildura Rural City Council
Multicultural Centre for Women's health (MCWH)
Narre Warren South P-12
New Hope Foundation (NHF)
NSW Education Program on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
Refugee Women's Health and Safety at Women's & Children's Health Network
Roxburgh College
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) Broadmeadows
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) Preston
St Kilda Mums
Sunraysia Community Health Centre (SCHS)
Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC)
Swinburne Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University
The University of Melbourne
Uniting Care Cutting Edge Shepparton
Uniting Care Lentara
Victoria Police
Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG)
Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC)
Whittlesea Multicultural Issues Network

Income and expenditure statement for the year ended 30 June 2014

	Notes	2014 \$	2013 \$
Income			
Grant Income		603,482	611,947
Interest received		8,288	12,601
Membership Fees		54	36
Consultancy Fees		–	–
Donations		1,300	4,717
Project Management & Admin. Reimbursements		50,400	61,504
Melbourne Uni Service Fees		910	178
Training		–	–
Total Income		664,434	690,983
Expenditure			
Salaries		370,670	376,990
Superannuation		33,817	33,637
Staff Travel		42,971	30,251
Staff Amenities		979	791
Other Employment Costs		1,690	2,620
Accounting and audit fees		18,755	18,409
Sessional Expenses		6,927	20,095
Bank Charges		194	209
Cleaning		1,103	727
Capital Expenditure (minor equipment)		–	–
Depreciation		2,306	2,391
Evaluation Expenses		19,000	–
Postage		60	171
Printing/Photocopy/Fax		14,526	15,758
Rent & Rates		18,690	20,501
Maintenance		1,213	2,827

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

	Notes	2014 \$	2013 \$
Catering		4,763	7,536
Resources		–	246
Office Expenses		1,016	1,328
Sundries		–	14
Telephone		6,003	5,513
A.G.M. Costs		2,908	3,248
Insurance		26,938	20,082
Training Costs		768	4,135
Publications/Subscriptions/Membership		230	555
Provision for Annual Leave		181	109
Provision for Long Service Leave		2,981	4,656
Consultancy / Professional Fees		–	–
Marketing & Promotions		548	2,162
Tutoring Fees		–	–
Conferences & Forums		–	–
Utilities Costs		2,322	2,916
Interpreting & Translation Costs		1,000	1,700
IT & Software Costs		2,033	2,164
Project Management Costs		50,400	61,504
Venue Hire		2,150	4,035
Childcare		450	1,860
Total Expenses		637,592	649,140
Profit before income tax		26,842	41,843
Income tax expense	2	–	–
Profit after income tax		26,842	41,843
Retained Profits at the beginning of the financial year		211,910	170,067
Retained Profits at the end of the financial year		238,752	211,910

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Assets and liabilities statement as at 30 June 2014

	Notes	2014 \$	2013 \$
Current Assets			
Cash	3	465,314	493,545
Trade and other receivables	4	—	—
Total Current Assets		465,314	493,545
Non Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	5	4,611	6,917
Total Non Current Assets		4,611	6,917
Total Assets		469,925	500,462
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other creditors	6	34,927	66,837
Amounts received in advance	7	102,000	130,631
Provisions	8	94,246	91,084
Total Current Liabilities		231,173	288,552
Total Liabilities		231,173	288,552
Net Assets		238,752	211,910
Members' Funds			
Retained profits		238,752	211,910
Total Members' Funds		238,752	211,910
Cash Flows from Operating Activities			
Receipts from Grants (Recurrent)		574,851	551,158
Receipts from customers		52,664	66,435
Payments to suppliers and employees		(607,572)	(522,792)
Interest received		8,288	12,601
Net Cash provided by operating activities	9	(28,231)	107,402
Cash Flows From Investing Activities			
Payments for purchase of property and equipment		—	—
Net Cash provided by (used in) investing activities		—	—
Net increase (decrease) in cash held		(28,231)	107,402
Cash at the beginning of the year		493,545	386,143
Cash at the end of the year		465,314	493,545

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2014

Note 1: Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

This financial report is special purpose financial report prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporations Act 1981 (Vic). The committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity.

The financial report has been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical costs and does not take into account changing money values or, except where specifically stated, current valuation of non-current assets.

The following significant accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless otherwise stated, have been adopted in preparation of this financial report.

a. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.

b. Income Tax

The income tax expense (revenue) for the year comprises current income tax expense (income). The association does not apply deferred tax.

Current income tax expense charged to the profit and loss is the tax payable on taxable income calculated using applicable income tax rates enacted, or substantially enacted, as at the end of the reporting period. Current tax liabilities (assets) are therefore measured at the amounts expected to be paid to (recovered from) the relevant taxation authority.

The Association is exempt from paying income tax by virtue of Section 50-45 of the Income Tax Assessment Act, 1997. Accordingly, tax effect accounting has not been adopted.

c. Property, Plant and Equipment

Leasehold improvements and office equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

The depreciable amount of all property, plant and equipment is depreciated over the useful lives of the assets to the association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use. Leasehold Improvements are amortised over the shorter of either the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful lives of the improvements.

d. Employee Entitlements

Provision is made for the Association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to the end of the reporting period. Employee benefits have been measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled.

Provision is made for the Association's liability for long service leave from commencement of employment, not from the 5 year employment period normally accrued as industry practice.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2014

e. Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the Association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured. Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period.

f. Impairment of Assets

At the end of each reporting period, the entity reviews the carrying values of its tangible and intangible assets to determine whether there is an indication that those assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs to sell and value in use, is compared to the asset's carrying value. Any excess of the asset's carrying value over its recoverable amount is recognised in the income and expenditure statement.

g. Revenue

Revenue is brought to account when received and to the extent that it relates to the subsequent period it is disclosed as a liability.

Grant Income

Grant income received, other than for specific purposes, is brought to account over the period to which the grant relates.

Deferred Income

Unspent grant income received in relation to specific projects and events is not brought to account as revenue in the

current year but deferred as a liability in the financial statements until spent for the purpose received.

Capital Grants

Grant Income received relating to the purchase of capital items is shown as Unamortised Capital Grant and brought to account over the expected life of the asset in proportion to the related depreciation charge.

Interest Revenue

Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest rate method, which for floating rate financial assets is the rate inherent in the instrument.

Donations

Donation income is recognised when the entity obtains control over the funds which is generally at the time of receipt.

All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST).

h. Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the assets and liabilities statement.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2014

	2014 \$	2013 \$
Note 2: Income Tax Expense		
Prima facie tax payable on operating profit at 30% (2013: 30%)	8,053	12,553
Less tax effect of: non-taxable member income arising from principle of mutuality	(8,053)	(12,553)
Income tax expense	—	—
Note 3: Cash and cash equivalents		
Cash at bank	465,314	493,545
Note 4: Trade and other receivables		
Trade and other receivables	—	—
Note 5: Property, plant and equipment		
Office equipment - at cost	13,542	13,542
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(8,931)	(6,625)
	<u>4,611</u>	<u>6,917</u>
Note 6: Trade and other payables		
Creditors and accruals	28,097	41,588
GST amounts payable	6,830	25,249
	<u>34,927</u>	<u>66,837</u>
Note 7: Amounts received in advance		
Grants in advance	102,000	130,631

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2014

	2014 \$	2013 \$
Note 8: Provisions		
Current		
Provision for annual leave	39,674	39,493
Provision for long service leave	54,572	51,591
	<u>94,246</u>	<u>91,084</u>

Note 9: Reconciliation of Cash Flow from Operations with Profit from Ordinary Activities after Income Tax

Profit after income tax	26,842	41,843
Cash flows excluded from operating profit attributable to operating activities		
Non-cash flows in profit		
Depreciation	2,306	2,391
Changes in assets and liabilities;		
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	—	—
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	(31,910)	(7,417)
Increase/(decrease) in amounts received in advance	(28,631)	65,720
Increase/(decrease) in project balances	—	—
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	3,162	4,865
Net cash provided by Operating Activities	<u>(28,231)</u>	<u>107,402</u>

Independent audit report to the members of Australian Muslim Women's Centre For Human Rights inc.

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights Inc., which comprises the assets and liabilities statement as at 30 June 2014, statement of cash flows as at 30 June 2014, and the income and expenditure statement for the year then ended, a summary of significant accounting policies, other explanatory notes and the statement by members of the committee.

Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The committee of the association is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report and has determined that the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statement, which form part of the financial report, are appropriate to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Vic) and are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The committee's responsibilities also include establishing and maintaining internal control as the committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We have conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those Auditing Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the association's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view, in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, financial report gives a true and fair view of the financial position of Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights Victoria Inc. as at 30 June 2014 and its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, and the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Vic).

Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights Inc. to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Vic). As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.



Rudolph Hosri
Hosri Accountants

Dated: 30th October 2014
IPA

6/418 Bell Street Pascoe Vale VIC 3044



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

Telephone 03 9481 3000

Facsimile: 03 9481 3001

Email: reception@muslimwomenscentre.org.au

www.ausmuslimwomenscentre.org.au