

Annual Report 2016 – 2017



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

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Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights

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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

Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer's Report

It is with great pleasure that we present the 2017 AMWCHR Annual Report. This year has been one of considerable success for the organisation as we have continued our efforts in direct service, advocacy, research and building strategic partnerships.

The experiences of Australian Muslim women continue to define the trajectory of our work, with their strength and resilience inspiring us to strive for greater outcomes across the community. As such, we have increased our understanding of issues faced by those accessing our support and help in a range of specific welfare contexts. These include women enduring family violence, the provision of trauma-informed care, women experiencing poverty and the challenges experienced by young Muslims in out-of-home care. The complexities of these latter issues have emerged via the expansion of our research base, informing our practical work in determining key welfare factors currently impacting Muslim women and children in our community.

We also continue to provide services to women impacted by international conflicts. These women are from Afghan, Iranian, Syrian, Iraqi, Oromo and Pakistani backgrounds, among others. In doing this work, it is crucial to acknowledge the role Islamophobia plays in shaping further post-settlement trauma for these women and their families. With young people in particular, the impact is significant, fostering a sense of exclusion and victimhood that has escalated mental health anxieties to record highs. AMWCHR has joined the Islamophobia Action Network this year, to

cement our commitment to responding to this vice, with a view to exposing unjust activity from institutions complicit in vilification that disenfranchises entire communities.

This year we have built new partnerships and strengthened existing ones. This has included the development of some innovative programs like Parenting for Peace, Respectful Relationships, and youth-led initiatives on human rights. In delivering our work, we have strengthened existing and formed new partnerships with small community-based groups and organisations as well as mainstream services. We also continue to provide secondary consultations where mainstream services seek our expertise in working with diverse communities.

We wish to commend our COO Nuzhat Lotia and the amazing staff and volunteers of AMWCHR who have worked tirelessly to address key concerns of Australian Muslim women. In an increasingly combative climate for this community, the team at AMWCHR are poised to deal with the ongoing challenges, through the support of a dedicated board, and various funding bodies who acknowledge the critical work we undertake in servicing the culturally specific needs of this vulnerable cohort. On behalf of the Board and the staff of AMWCHR, we offer a heartfelt thanks to all our supporters, and to the women themselves, hardworking champions that they are. Their resilience inspires us to do better every day.

Tasneem Chopra
Chair – AMWCHR

Joumanah El Matrah
CEO



Some AMWCHR Board and Staff members

Strengthening
social
connections

Service users: **100**

Supporting
and empowering
women towards
self-reliance and
independence:

Service users: **3,551**

Forging
partnerships and
networks:

Partnerships and
networks: **91**

Transforming
community
leadership

Service users: **775**

Our numbers for 2016-17

1,727 services delivered
6,973 community
members and organisations
who accessed our
services

Reaching out
through the
media, publications
and community
events:

Service users: **511**

Bringing a
community
perspective
through community
consultations:

Service users: **110**

Building sector
capacity
Trainings on Islam and
Muslims, Early and Forced
Marriage and Islam and Family
Violence:

Service users: **1,822**

Supporting
others in service
delivery

Secondary
consultations: **114**

Projects

AMWCHR has continued to expand on its specialised programs and services which include community capacity building, youth leadership, mainstream sector capacity building, case management and specialist research on issues specific to Muslim women. In the last financial year programs and services were delivered in various locations across Melbourne, regional Victoria and interstate. A core aspect of AMWCHR's work is working with groups of women of all ages and backgrounds. Our faith in the power of groups, of women coming together and voicing their concerns, sharing feelings, supporting each other and collectively finding solutions grows stronger with each passing year. We continue to ensure the currency and relevance of our programs and expertise through our dedicated commitment to ongoing action research, informed by the experiences and voices of the community we represent.

Many of the projects and programs delivered by AMWCHR involved collaborations with external stakeholders including all tiers of government, academic institutions, the education and justice sectors, mainstream service providers, other not-for-profit organisations and community-based organisations. AMWCHR established partnerships or collaborated with over 40 external stakeholder agencies during the last financial year. The ongoing demand for AMWCHR's unique expertise is evident in the breadth of stakeholders and locations where we have delivered programs. In recognising the importance of building the capacity of Muslim community workers and leaders, AMWCHR worked closely with multicultural and bilingual Muslim community workers to implement projects, thus building their skills and helping them gain recognition in their communities. As a result, some of them have been able to gain employment in the community sector.



AMWCHR event participants

Projects

Children and Parenting Services

The impact of migration on families is profound and continues well beyond the initial five years of settlement. On the one hand, there is hope for a better life, an escape from the difficult, often dangerous circumstances they have left behind; on the other, there are the very real challenges of raising children in a new country, a new culture with vastly different systems, values and practices, away from a familiar social support system. Experiences of past trauma and/or of racism in the host country further compound the process of adjustment. Support in this context is crucial for women who bear much of the parenting burden, and can go a long way in improving their overall wellbeing.

The Cornerstones project thus aims to improve child development outcomes and wellbeing by supporting mothers who are disadvantaged and vulnerable as a result of these compounding factors. Migrant Muslim women of diverse backgrounds have always had significant concerns about parenting, and therefore this issue is a major part of our groupwork services,

which provide support to participants through interactive sessions. These sessions created a space for parents to voice their concerns and anxieties around parenting, to interact with and learn from other parents and to learn new parenting skills and strategies to support child development, as well as their own wellbeing. These groups served as a safe space for parents to openly discuss their concerns, and special care was taken to ensure everyone was heard, including the few fathers who attended. The feedback from the groups has been extremely positive, with parents reporting that the sessions helped them to understand and confidently support their children in meaningful ways. During the sessions, participants demonstrated the skills they had learnt to develop closer relationships with their children and engage them in activities. The children also appeared to have improved their social skills by the end of the groupwork program, and interacted more with other children. These are all notable and significant tangible outcomes for the project.

Settlement Services Program (SSP)

AMWCHR continued to provide settlement support to newly arrived Muslim women, as they face the challenges of adjusting to a new country and cultural context, and making new lives for themselves.

The settlement work focuses on supporting Muslim women by promoting economic and personal wellbeing, independence and connectedness within the communities we work with, particularly in Melbourne, Goulburn and Mallee. Building knowledge, confidence and self-

reliance allows women to access mainstream services for their needs, including pathways to learning English, education and employment readiness. A comprehensive range of strategies enables this: consultation with community; information sessions and workshops; radio programs and media presence; promotion, advocacy and networking; events such as conferences, expos and recreation days; study skills for young women; training for mainstream services; and collaborative work.



Parenting Program



Parenting Program

The Parenting Program plays a central role in supporting newly arrived women through groupwork support, awareness and education. Often newly arrived Muslim women face many obstacles as they undertake their parenting responsibilities in a new country because of limited access to and awareness of support services that may assist them in their role as parents. This program aims to provide practical parenting support by helping mothers better understand family, health and educational support services, as well as strategies for effective communication and building healthy parent–child relationships. Participants in our parenting program over the last year have reported an almost immediate improvement in their own relationships with their children through increased empathy, and expressed a need for similar work with fathers.

Farsi-speaking mothers in the Whittlesea Community Connection group reported that

the information, guidance and support they had received in the group helped them deal with their parenting anxieties in a new culture, allowing them to better manage the issues they face. The friendships that continue to grow out of the group are also a great source of strength for participants. In the Dandenong group, the mothers benefitted most from learning around developing routines for children, the negative effects of physical punishment and the law. Many of the women said that they were now spending more quality time with their children in activities such as gardening, household chores and visits to the park and library, and that this was significantly improving their relationships. For the Mildura mothers, it was important that fathers also be involved, particularly for the sessions around understanding cultural issues, which they found extremely useful. Shepparton participants found the information about the education system and schools the most useful.

Projects

Supporting and Building Muslim Mothers

The overall purpose of this project is to provide settlement support to eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants during their first five years in Australia to enable them to become fully-functioning and self-reliant members of society. The project also aims to maximise productive diversity and social cohesion.

During the year, 343 women participated in and benefitted from this program, through increased understanding, learning and interaction with other women. The diverse nature of the participants involved in this project and the wide scope of the activities means that every

group has a unique experience of learning. For many of the newly arrived women who attended the Arabic-speaking Whittlesea Community Connection group, this was invaluable as it was the only time they left the house and focused on themselves. It allowed them to socialise, gain confidence and reflect on healthy relationships and parenting. In Geelong, the participants benefitted most from learnings on mental health. Additionally, this created a space in which participants, who were predominantly single mothers, could voice their concerns, share common experiences and gain strength from each other during the settlement process.

Casework Support and Advocacy

Through AMWCHR's well-established relationships with service providers and unique role within the Muslim community, the casework program has supported over sixty women in their settlement process this financial year. Assisting women to stabilise and enhance their lives by gaining access to support and opportunities can help address the deep impacts of living with inequality, violence and disadvantage.

Our clientele come from a broad range of cultural, ethnic and linguistic contexts and are predominantly settling on refugee, humanitarian and family visas. Most referrals to casework came through social services or community organisations as well as some personal networks and self-referrals. Women contacted our service from Melbourne and

throughout Victoria but in particular from the Moreland, Greater Dandenong, Whittlesea and Casey areas.

The issues we address include: poverty; unemployment and lack of opportunity; understanding rights, laws and responsibilities; housing challenges; Islamic divorce; marriage mediation; family violence; mental health care; and early/forced marriage. Our casework services aim to support Muslim women to be independent and have the knowledge, skills and confidence to socially contribute through parenting, working and connecting with community. We assist women to engage and navigate mainstream services that can effectively develop individual and collective capacity.



Projects

As newly-arrived Muslim women develop their skills and capacity, they can go on to support their families and each other, becoming a strong collective that provides vital networks for new and existing communities. Over the year, the casework program partnered with many organisations, either to receive clients for focused support and strategies for dealing with crisis and/or everyday challenges, or to refer women into mainstream organisations that can assist in meeting their urgent needs. This

facilitated engagement can aid trusting and enriching relationships between Muslim women and the mainstream service sector.

This program also provides invaluable support to the sector through secondary consultations. Diverse organisations such as educational institutions, hospitals, and community organisations have enhanced their services for Muslim women by being better informed about cultural contexts and understanding, as a result of our secondary consultation work.

Young Women's Program

AMWCHR has been approached by a number of schools seeking assistance in the delivery of settlement support to newly arrived students. The Young Women's Program provides general settlement support for newly arrived young Muslim women, through consultations and focused information sessions exploring the specific issues and needs of each group. 'Living in Australia' sessions utilise strengths-based work addressing the very early stages of settlement; leadership sessions look to the future roles young Muslims can play for themselves and the community; peer support and study skills sessions equip our young people with skills to help in their education and goals.

Over this past year young women engaging with these sessions have expressed fear about their futures and that of their families and a sense of isolation in many challenges they face. Going through adolescence while managing their intercultural lives is hard work. The topics covered aimed to support young women's health and enhance their sense of hope, self-

esteem, wellbeing and self-care. Topics included healthy relationships, Australian laws and rights, career development, goal setting, the Australian education system, communication, conflict resolution skills and more.

The leadership programs and peer support sessions offer these young woman invaluable opportunities to see relatable role models and learn about how young Muslims have created meaningful lives for themselves in Australian contexts. Young women who were previous participants of AMWCHR leadership programs came to meet other young women in peer support sessions to discuss their roles and social contribution to the school community through social participation such as student representative roles, highlighting day-to-day action that can help to build social cohesion and provides a vital voice for young Muslim women. Through these programs students have made recommendations to their school on how to be more culturally sensitive to their needs, promoting inclusion and mutual



Young Women's Program participants

respect. Student suggestions included cross-cultural training for teachers and utilising school assemblies as a platform to express identity and share experiences with the broader school

community. The most important learning for young Muslim women is that they can advocate for themselves and their peers.

Muslim Youth Leadership

AMWCHR through its Young Women's Program has also been invited to a number of schools to support communities by facilitating dialogues on issues of identity, racism and discrimination. Sessions on these issues were delivered to young people from 18 different cultural, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, in various settings including English language schools, mainstream public schools and Muslim schools in Melbourne and regional Victoria. The connections made and opportunities created are impressive. Across diverse backgrounds, themes arose

that showed many young Muslims feeling alienated and unheard. Many expressed feeling caught between political dialogues, inequality, racism and social/cultural expectations. The receptiveness to these sessions, the powerful dialogues generated and the improved sense of hopefulness reported back to facilitators is testimony to the important work being done.

These programs provided powerful opportunities for young people to voice their personal challenges and gain insight through self-

Projects

awareness and human rights frameworks, unpacking concepts of power and privilege, and developing natural leadership skills. Young people who took part in the program reported an increase in their confidence to tackle issues

such as their sense of identity, community, and empowerment as well as skills for leadership, communication, conflict resolution and peace building.

Community Language Radio Programs

AMWCHR finds using community language radio to reach out to the larger Muslim community, including men, a very successful community education and awareness-raising strategy. The radio programs developed and aired over the year addressed the issues of early/forced

marriage, family violence and Islamophobia while also focusing on educating the community about Australian legal frameworks covering each of these. The feedback received from listeners has been very positive and validates the need for more such awareness-raising.

Parenting for Peace

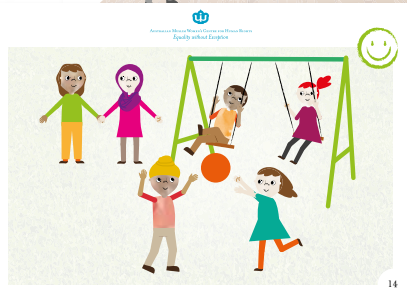
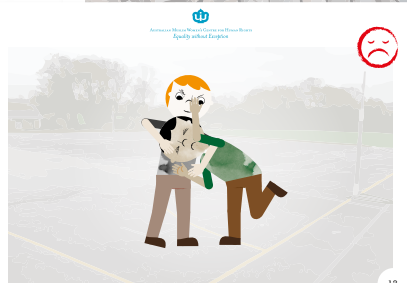
The Parenting for Peace project was developed, rooted strongly in the belief that women must play a significant role in all peace-building efforts, and that this is currently a relatively unrecognised resource. The project therefore aims to work with Muslim mothers to help them develop skills and tools that consciously incorporate values of peace, justice and equality into their parenting style and interactions with young children. During the initial focus groups that informed the development of the project, women highlighted a lack of information and understanding around peace-related concepts. They wanted to build skills to promote peace and address conflict with their children, through reflecting on their families' pre-migration experiences and challenging personal attitudes that are barriers to peace, such as social biases and prejudices towards certain groups. The final modules that have been developed contain three main components: self-awareness (self-

reflection, identity, personal attitudes, etc); socio-political awareness and knowledge (diversity, human rights, peace, conflict, gender); skills and behaviour (talking to children, tools to help children reflect on peace and diversity, teaching children peace behaviours, promoting peace values in the community through mothers). Discussions on peace values and how to teach children peace were highly appreciated by the women.

The Parenting for Peace project is being implemented as a series of regular, interactive group sessions with mothers of young children, and is divided into two parts. The first constitutes the delivery of Module 1 (basic level), consisting of 6–10 sessions with each group of women, focusing on developing mothers' awareness and skills in order to instil peace values in their children. Module 2 (advanced level) is run with a selected group of women

who show leadership potential, to further develop their awareness and skills in promoting peace values in the community through their peers, thereby contributing to community development. The focus on self-awareness is an essential component, allowing participants to explore, reflect on and ultimately challenge social attitudes that contribute to racism, cultural conflict, human rights abuses and violence such as prejudice (including their own) and negative stereotyping. The flexible and holistic approach of the modules adds strength to the project, allowing for new learning and creative techniques to be added as and when needed.

A special, innovative feature of this project is the development and use of a pictorial toolkit to aid mothers in having conversations with little children in a safe and child-friendly way about peace and peace values such as diversity, equality and compassion. The toolkit comprises of 21 images – 15 of these depict children and adults from diverse backgrounds demonstrating peace values by interacting positively with each other in a range of settings. These settings show equal gender relations, compassion towards the elderly and disabled, caring for animals and the environment, and friendship among diverse groups. Other images in the toolkit depict healthy and unhealthy social behaviours to generate a conversation on such interactions and their impact. The feedback about the cards has been overwhelmingly positive, with some schools enlarging the cards and using them as posters with positive messaging to display around the school.



A total of 16 sessions have been conducted with mothers, primarily from Afghan, Indian, Pakistani, and Iranian backgrounds. The feedback has been very positive and encouraging, with participants reporting improvements in three areas. Firstly, in their awareness of human rights, peace and peace values, in particular the impact of the home

Projects

environment, family messages and attitudes (such as prejudice) on children's world views and social behaviour. Secondly, there was greater understanding of gender-based discrimination

as well as the importance of gender equality in creating an equitable and just society. Lastly, and importantly, they had more confidence in addressing these issues with their children.

Young Muslims for Peace and Human Rights

This program takes a multilayered approach to Muslim students' experiences of exclusion and alienation, while building capacity in areas of leadership, social participation and advocacy.

The program is a response to the increase in anti-Muslim rhetoric in the Australian community. Young Muslims have voiced their concerns and confusion about being targeted for being Muslim and being racially vilified. Often schools and communities are not resourced to deal with the emerging issues around adolescent identity, religious identity, racism, discrimination and social inclusion in a meaningful way. In this regard, the project explored issues that are important to young Muslims, and helped them to develop strategies to support and improve their self-esteem and positive identity formation. The program also worked with teachers and parents to develop their capacity to support their young people and voice the challenges they face in educating and offering guidance.

The program was run throughout the year at East Preston Islamic College, and included two highly successful camps, one for young Muslim men and one for young Muslim women. Sessions offered personal development and

creative ways to unpack issues and experiences through physical and mental challenge. There were also creative sessions including meditation, art therapy, self-care, survivor challenges, kickboxing and martial arts, and creative writing. Gendered identities and expectations were challenged in activities that gave young people the chance to see different strengths and characters come to the fore. Relationships developed between students, facilitators and teachers in these bonding processes and have impacted back in the school community, creating greater understandings and respect. Following on from the camps monthly sessions were held covering topics such as team building, self-care and self-awareness, confidence, behavioural change, emotional intelligence and communication skills.

Through creating a safe space, dialogue and representation with these young people, there is a developed understanding of the importance of social contribution, advocacy and self-belief. The students and teachers report dramatically improved relationships and understanding of each other, reducing conflict and dysfunction within peer groups, classrooms and the broader school community.



Camp activities for Young Muslims for Peace and Human Rights project participants

Muslim Women and Respectful Relationships

This pilot project, funded by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, sought to tackle early and/or forced marriage and family violence directly, with a focus on improving civic and legal literacy on these issues, both for migrant Muslim women and for service providers. The holistic approach of the project links various forms of discrimination and abuse to the broader concept of family violence as a gender issue.

The project is guided by 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. Three groupwork modules (two for women – older and younger – and one for service providers) have been developed as part of this project.

Sixteen service providers participated in the training, including women's legal service social workers, lawyers, paralegals and community educators. Service providers reported very

limited knowledge of the issue of early and/or forced marriage, with the media being the most common source of information on the issue and the Muslim community in general.

Nine girls from Afghan and Somali backgrounds, studying at North Geelong Secondary College, also participated in the program. These sessions aimed at increasing their understanding of all forms of abuse and family violence, as well as their knowledge of their rights, the law and services. A similar workshop was conducted with fourteen Afghan women in Dandenong on issues of family violence and early and/or forced marriage. Many of these women, like many other groups with whom we work, had been in Australia for years and yet had little understanding of their rights, of family violence and of options for support. Such workshops, therefore, are important sources of learning, reflection and confidence, and for making an impact.

Projects

Celebrating Muslim Women's Skills and Talents

"I felt first time after coming from Afghanistan that I am in my family. Thankyou AMWCHR for a very warm welcome and opportunity to meet with all women."

Many of the women we work with come from refugee backgrounds; many of them have endured great hardships before making Australia home – grief and loss, armed conflict and war, persecution, displacement and trauma are not strangers to them. The emotional burden of their difficult and traumatic pasts, along with the struggle of settling into a new country, can make their lives hard. Social isolation, anxiety, fear, depression and preoccupation with the practical concerns of living leaves them no time for – nor even awareness of – the need to take care of their own wellbeing.

AMWCHR hosted an International Women's Day celebration with eighty women from Afghan, Iranian, Pakistani, Lebanese, Syrian and Iraqi backgrounds. The event provided an opportunity for them to seek inspiration, socialise with other women, and, most importantly, to take a break from their daily struggles, focus on themselves and have fun!

The event provided a range of entertaining and relaxing activities such as henna painting, arts and crafts and yoga. The activities were a great success, with all the women participating enthusiastically. The day ended with them singing and dancing to music from their cultures.

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The women reported that it had been a wonderful day for them – a relief from the pressures

of daily life, an opportunity to meet other women from similar as well as different ethnic backgrounds and diverse areas of the city, a chance to shut out the hard world outside for just a day and focus on themselves, their own health and wellbeing. This celebration provided a space for the women to be themselves, and an opportunity to gain positive energy and the motivation to take their lives forward despite all the hardships they face. Given the overwhelmingly positive response, we hope that we can make this a regular activity in the future.



Preparing for Celebrating Muslim Women's Skills and Talents event



Participants at Celebrating Muslim Women's Skills and Talents event



What women are saying

“This was an absolutely amazing and fun program. Throughout all the different activities and conversations. I was engaged and soaking everything up like a sponge. Thank you so much for this opportunity.” – Young Woman’s Radio Program participant.

“Just to let you know we’re on track now.” – Casework client.

“Now I know that when I am stressed, I should not take it out on my children.” – Parenting program participant.

“Much clearer understanding of Islam, the history of practices and differences across nationalities and sects.” – Training participant.

“This program was really good, it taught me to be confident and feel good about myself, I even tell my sister about the program.” – Young woman taking part in Leadership Program.

“Beforehand I knew only what the media would say. I knew nothing! It has completely and greatly contributed to my lack of knowledge.” – Training participant.

“Thank you for your help. If it wasn’t for your service, I wouldn’t be where I am today.” – Casework client.

“I learnt that being passive all the time is not the best. All our life we are told that women need to be quiet.” – Building mother’s capacity program participant.

“Parenting has become easier for me. I have some guidelines and know how to tackle issues.” – Parenting for Peace program participant.

“Before I was worried about my kids’ education, but now I know that as long as they are happy and a respectful person, even if they are artists, I will be happy.” – Parenting for Peace program participant.

“I used to be angrier, now I know how to control my anger better.” – Building mother’s capacity program participant.

Research

Over the last few years, AMWCHR has been steadily building its capacity in research, aiming to better understand the dynamics of how Muslim women and their families are affected by their psychosocial issues within the current socio-political context. In the last year, we have undertaken four research projects.

New Lives in Old Communities

For several years – because of anecdotal information about their vulnerable situation – AMWCHR has been concerned about young Muslims living in out-of-home care (OOHC) arrangements. Despite the fact that a large number of children from diverse backgrounds go through the system, there is a serious dearth of information about them, their numbers and their challenges. We also know that issues related to diversity and religious identity continue to present significant challenges for the OOHC sector, which struggles to consistently provide appropriate, effective and sustained care to children from diverse backgrounds.

Funded by the Sidney Myer Fund, AMWCHR committed itself to learning more about the issue, to better understand the challenges and to improve service delivery to young people in the system. Specifically, the study included an assessment of our organisational capacity to support young Muslims in the sector, of existing

resources for carers in the sector, and of the challenges faced by the young people as well as by the service providers. We also aimed to assist the sector to build its capacity to provide better, more effective and inclusive services. Findings from the research helped significantly in the development of an information booklet for young Muslims, as well as two additional brochures for service providers and carers.



Fostering Family Resilience in Muslim Families: Developing a Flexible Modular Approach

Supported by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Fostering Family Resilience in Muslim Families (FRMF) research project aims to develop and implement a pilot group prevention program to improve family resilience and the wellbeing, sense of belonging and

capacity for community engagement of young people and parents from a Muslim and migrant background. The project is being conducted in collaboration with Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health and is designed to be implemented in two phases. The first phase

considers factors that influence family resilience in Muslim families, through a series of focus group discussions with Muslim parents, children and community leaders. The second phase involves developing a pilot group prevention program, designed to foster family resilience and

wellbeing. The pilot will be based on recognised family resilience models and will consider factors impacting on family resilience which have been identified by the Muslim community. Development of the program will include an evaluation of the model.

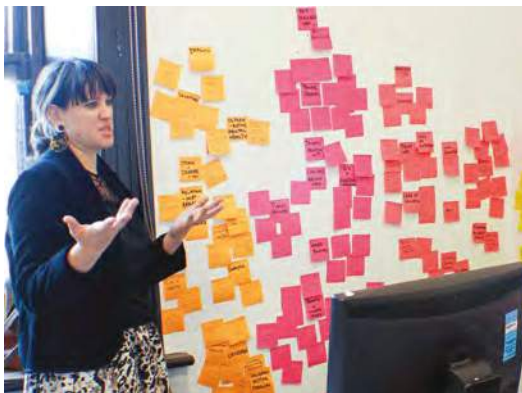
Understanding the Cycle of Poverty Experienced by Muslim women

With the support of the Reichstein Foundation, AMWCHR conducted qualitative research exploring Muslim women's experiences, challenges and responses to poverty.

Over a number of months, in-depth interviews were held with service providers, as well as an online survey. A focus group and in-depth interviews were also carried out with women from diverse backgrounds, ages and marital/family situations (all with refugee and migrant backgrounds), who are settling in Melbourne and currently experiencing poverty.

We found that Muslim women, due to their politicisation, can be considered a group experiencing 'a unique isolation', which can be a barrier to engagement with services and supportive relationships. We also found that poverty heightens pre-existing conditions/experiences such as trauma, social exclusion, health and mental health issues and disadvantage. Living in poverty limits women's access to basic human rights such as safe/stable accommodation, education, health and opportunity. This also applies to their

dependants, including children and elderly. When coupled with settlement in a new country, poverty is a common experience, highly traumatic for many.



Understanding the Cycle of Poverty Experienced by Muslim Women research process

We have developed recommendations to respond to systemic issues in addressing Muslim women's needs and we had the privilege of recording the processes of resistance and survival that women practise in their everyday lives to survive poverty.

Research

Increasing Access to Trauma-informed Care for CALD and Muslim Women Affected by Violence

The trauma-informed care project has been funded by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, and is being conducted in collaboration with Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health. The project aims to investigate barriers and facilitators to accessing trauma-informed care for women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Muslim backgrounds who have experienced interpersonal violence. The study begins with exploring CALD 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 CALD (primarily Muslim) women and a survey of service providers. The second phase involves an assessment of the implementation of a trauma-informed model of care adapted to the needs of CALD women. The implementation will involve the provision of training and consultations with staff in Geelong agencies.



Small Projects

Muslim Girls – Better Futures

Westpac Foundation funded the Young Women's Program (YWP) to work at Narre Warren South P-12 College, a lead partner in the Respectful Relationships training. YWP jumped at the chance to contribute a culturally sensitive exploration of the work already being done, helping young women to think critically about their cultural constructs of love, partnerships and ideas about their future. Young women responded energetically to the material and the opportunity to have honest, open discussions and reflect critically.

For many young Muslim women, marriage is part of their future goals and through these modules, young women were supported to explore when and how they would like this to happen and why they see this as an important part of their futures. The sessions also helped participants to think about the impacts of marriage and how it will relate to other hopes and goals for their futures. The Young Women's Program has been privileged to enter into deep and trusting discussions on these subjects. The ability to do this comes from the unique place the YWP takes in educational and cultural dialogue for young Muslims in and around Melbourne.

Preparing for a Better Future: Muslim Young Women's Education Program

Darebin Council funded consultations at the Charles La Trobe College, aimed at developing a program that responded to the needs of young Muslims, to discuss racism, religious discrimination and intergenerational/intercultural disconnection.

For the first time, the Young Women's Program has begun working with young Muslim men alongside young Muslim women, in a step

towards creating meaningful understandings of gender equality, social and cultural constructs of gender roles and essential human rights, all of which we believe can genuinely affect social change. These vital interventions into young Muslims' lives – creating space to know self and surrounds, and identify and strategise social and cultural pressures – is aiding participants to face their issues, personally and collectively.

Small Projects

Respect, Responsibility, Resilience: Muslim Women Exploring Relationship Dynamics in a New Country

This project, supported by the City of Greater Dandenong, took a holistic approach to addressing the issue of early and/or forced marriage, and aimed to increase Muslim women's self and social awareness, thereby preventing early and/or forced marriage. The project was run with twenty-eight women, as a two-day workshop, divided into two stages.

The first stage focused on the women at a personal level, developing their self-awareness, self-worth and confidence as women and community leaders. The second stage aimed to build social awareness on the issue of early

and/or marriage and related factors (gender and family violence) and challenging harmful attitudes. The sessions enabled women to view how gender roles and responsibilities are central to the impact culture and society have on women and marital relationships, as well as how women are disadvantaged and discriminated against because of these gender expectations. Participants gained conceptual clarity on definitions, forms and impact of abuse, and on laws and services that can support women. Very positive feedback emerged, with participants reporting their learning had been both at a personal and a professional level.

Respect, Resilience, Responsibility

Supported by the Moreland City Council, this project aimed to provide a space for women to receive information on respectful relationships and family violence in a safe and non-threatening way, including information on law and support services. Forty-four women participated in group sessions, which were attended by guest speakers from InTouch – the Multicultural Centre against Family Violence and the Northern Community Legal Centre,

who provided information about their services. There was immense interest and participation in the sessions, with a large number of women asking questions and sharing their experiences. Since the completion of the group work, there have been continued requests from the women's group to do more work with them around family violence and parenting issues in the Moreland area.

Evaluating the Muslim Women's Respectful Relationships Project

AMWCHR was funded by VicHealth to undertake an evaluation of a pilot of the Muslim Women and Respectful Relationships project. AMWCHR staff participated in a one-day training workshop to develop a shared understanding of the key elements of the Change the Story framework and to build staff capacity in the use of the framework to undertake evidence-

based evaluation of the project's impact and outcomes. During the workshop, staff collectively developed a Theory of Change for the Muslim Women and Respectful Relationships project consistent with the Change the Story framework. This was then used to develop an evaluation plan and tools.

Sector Development, Education and Training

Delivery of training and education sessions continues to be a key component of our work. Workers from various organisations and services have participated in our training sessions. These sessions seek to improve service delivery to Muslim communities and are an important part of our capacity-building strategy.

We conducted a number of training sessions for the Australian Federal Police in Canberra, which provided information on diversity within

the Muslim community and Islam, which were very well received. We also conducted five training sessions for the Attorney General's Department in five major cities across Australia. In the last year, education and training have taken AMWCHR to rural Victoria – Moe, Mildura and Bendigo – as well as Wagga Wagga in rural NSW. Evaluations from all of these workshops have been extremely positive, with participants appreciating the extra time allowed for discussions and questions.

At a glance

| | 2016–2017 |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Individual support to women | 1311 |
| Secondary consultations | 115 |
| Groupwork sessions | 141 |
| Participants | 1887 |
| Peer support sessions | 8 |
| Participants | 100 |
| Leadership workshop sessions | 66 |
| Participants | 775 |
| Education/training/presentations | 41 |
| Participants | 1822 |
| Community consultations | 8 |
| Participants | 110 |
| Information sessions | 16 |
| Participants | 218 |
| Study skills sessions | 9 |
| Participants | 135 |
| Community Events | 5 |
| Participants | 500 |
| Networking meetings | 73 |
| Radio Programs | 7 |

Media

'Real Talk: The Lives of Arab Women'

The Wheeler Centre

www.wheelercentre.com/broadcasts/podcasts/the-wheeler-centre/real-talk-the-lives-of-arab-women



'Patriot shame: new citizens deserve respect, not contempt' *The Guardian*

www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/15/patriot-shame-new-citizens-deserve-respect-not-contempt

'Terrorism has changed. Blaming Islam is blinding us to the new reality' *The Guardian*

www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/15/terrorism-has-changed-blaming-islam-is-blinding-us-to-the-new-reality

'Brexit, the Australia-China extradition treaty & ACTU's call for \$45/week increase to the minimum wage' *ABC The Drum*

www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-29/the-drum-wednesday-march-29/8398584



'Women of Hizb ut-Tahrir video is alarming – and based on misconception' *The Guardian*

www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/15/women-of-hizb-ut-tahrir-video-is-alarming-and-based-on-misconception

'Yassmin Abdel-Magied said nothing wrong. She should not have to face this venom'

The Guardian

www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/21/yassmin-abdel-magied-said-nothing-wrong-she-should-not-have-to-face-this-venom

Advisory Committees, Networks and Consultations

1. The Annual National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, Australian Government Attorney General's Department
2. AMES Australia: HSS Local Area Coordination
3. Moreland Multicultural and Settlement Services Network
4. Hume Multicultural Workers Network
5. North East Region Settlement Planning
6. Victorian Forced Marriage Network
7. Whittlesea Settlement Planning Committee
8. Victoria Police Muslim Reference Group
9. Family Relationship Centre Cultural Consultative Group
10. Community Resilience Community of Practice Group, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Special thanks

Our donors

Department of Social Services (DSS)
City of Greater Dandenong
City of Darebin
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
Moreland City Council

R E Ross Trust
Reichstein Foundation
Sidney Myer Fund
Scanlon Foundation
Vic Health
Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC)
Westpac Foundation

Our collaborating organisations

3CR Community Radio
Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES)
Afghan Program SBS Radio
Afghan Women's Association of Victoria
African Women Australia (AWAU)
African Women's Council of Australia (AWCoA)
AMES Dandenong
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 Federal Police
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
Catholic Care Dandenong
Centrelink

Charles La Trobe P-12 College
Child FIRST (DHS)
Child Protection (DHHS)
Chisholm Institute
City of Darebin
Co-Health North Melbourne
Dandenong North Primary School
Dandenong South Primary School
Dandenong West Primary School
Darebin Community Health Centre (DCH)
Deakin University
Dianella Community Health
Diversitat
Doveton College
East Preston Islamic College (EPIC)
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV)
Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District
Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program (FARREP)
Fawkner Community House
Family Relationship Centre Broadmeadows
Foundation House
Gippsland Multicultural Services
Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE (GOTAFE)
Shepparton

Special thanks

Halal Food Project
Headspace
Hume Central Secondary College
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
Mildura Rural City Council
Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH)
Myriad Consultants
Narre Warren South P-12 College
Neami National
New Hope Foundation (NHF)
Newbury Child and Community Centre
Noble Park English Language School
North Geelong Secondary College
Northern Community Legal Centre
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
Roxburgh Park Secondary College
Royal Women's Hospital
Salvation Army
Stand up
Settlement Council of Australia
Sirius College
Southern Migrant Resource Centre
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) Broadmeadows
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) Preston
Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC)
TAFE Mildura
Virgin Mary Mosque
Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG)
Victoria Police
Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC)
Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE)
Women's Health in the North (WHIN)
Women's Health West
Women's Legal Service Victoria
Yarra Community Housing

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2017

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

| | 2017 \$ | 2016 \$ |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Current Assets | | |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents | | |
| Cash at Bank | 714,397 | 458,323 |
| Term Deposit | 265,730 | 260,944 |
| | 980,127 | 719,267 |
| Trade and Other Receivables | | |
| Accounts Receivable | 44,027 | 1,400 |
| Prepayments | 1,236 | – |
| Security Bond | 10,002 | 10,001 |
| | 55,265 | 11,401 |
| Total Current Assets | 1,035,392 | 730,668 |
| Non-Current Assets | | |
| Property, Plant and Equipment | | |
| Office Equipment – at Cost | 19,359 | 15,367 |
| Less: Provision for Depreciation | (11,229) | (9,908) |
| | 8,130 | 5,459 |
| Total Non-Current Assets | 8,130 | 5,459 |
| Total Assets | 1,043,522 | 736,127 |

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2017

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

| | 2017 | 2016 |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Current Liabilities | | |
| Trade and Other Payable | | |
| Accounts Payable | 22,120 | 14,775 |
| Accrued Expenses | 2,075 | 1,452 |
| GST Payable | 21,485 | 45,919 |
| PAYG Withholding Tax Payable | 7,356 | 5,886 |
| Superannuation Payable | 16,207 | 13,692 |
| | 69,243 | 81,724 |
| Deferred Income | | |
| Grants Received in Advance | 519,593 | 297,640 |
| | 519,593 | 297,640 |
| Employment Entitlement Provisions | | |
| Provision for Annual Leave | 56,190 | 57,007 |
| Provision for Long Service Leave | 72,120 | 68,695 |
| Provision for Time in Lieu | 5,335 | – |
| | 133,645 | 125,703 |
| Total Current Liabilities | 722,481 | 505,067 |
| Non-Current Liabilities | | |
| Employment Entitlement Provisions | | |
| Provision for Long Service Leave | – | – |
| Total Non-Current Liabilities | – | – |
| Total Liabilities | 722,481 | 505,067 |
| Net Assets | 321,041 | 231,060 |
| Equity | | |
| Accumulated Members Funds | 321,041 | 231,060 |
| | 321,041 | 231,060 |

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2017

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

| | 2017 | 2016 |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Income | | |
| Grant Income | 960,236 | 716,544 |
| Project Management & Admin. Reimbursements | – | – |
| Donations | 150 | 30 |
| Insurance Claim Received | 2,656 | – |
| Interest received | 5,033 | 5,966 |
| Management Fees | 88,605 | – |
| Membership Fees | 60 | 20 |
| Sundry Income | – | 27,672 |
| Training | 17,375 | 9,370 |
| Total Income | 1,074,115 | 759,602 |
| | | |
| | 2017 | 2016 |
| | \$ | \$ |
| Expenditure | | |
| Staff Salaries, Wages & Oncost | | |
| Salaries & Wages | 546,277 | 479,043 |
| Superannuation Contributions | 50,299 | 66,268 |
| Salary Oncosts | 23,533 | – |
| Employee Leave Entitlements – Annual Leave | – | 17,188 |
| Employee Leave Entitlements – Long Service Leave | – | 4,193 |
| | 620,109 | 566,691 |
| Premises Expenses | | |
| Rent & Rates | 40,580 | 29,950 |
| Cleaning | – | – |
| Utilities Costs | 11,963 | 8,944 |
| Office Relocation | – | 850 |
| | 52,543 | 39,743 |

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2017

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

| Expenditure | 2017 | 2016 |
|---|----------------|---------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Staff Related Expenses | | |
| Catering | 9,837 | 12,101 |
| Other Employment Costs | 88,992 | 10,669 |
| Recruitment | – | 2,000 |
| Staff Amenities | 1,112 | 1,379 |
| Staff Travel | 43,316 | 31,359 |
| Training Costs | 5,671 | 3,155 |
| | 148,928 | 60,662 |
| Communications Expenses | | |
| Telephone | – | – |
| Office Overhead Expenses | | |
| AGM Expenses | 2,832 | 4,735 |
| IT & Software Costs | 8,455 | 8,833 |
| Office Expenses | 9,780 | 6,960 |
| Postage | – | – |
| Printing/Photocopy/Fax3 | – | – |
| | 21,067 | 20,528 |
| Insurance | 9,570 | 19,402 |
| Finance, Audit & Accounting Fees | | |
| Accounting & Audit Fees | 31,690 | 15,894 |
| Administration Support Fee | 300 | – |
| Bank Charges | 295 | 261 |
| Interest Paid | 231 | – |
| | 32,516 | 16,155 |
| Memberships, Resources & Subscriptions | | |
| Publications/Subscriptions/Membership | 77 | – |
| Resources | 23,268 | 2,200 |
| | 23,345 | 2,200 |

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2017

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

| Expenditure | 2017 | 2016 |
|---|----------------|-----------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Programming and Planning | | |
| Camp Expenses | 11,917 | – |
| Childcare | – | 2,041 |
| Evaluation Expenses | 11,000 | 5,000 |
| Expert Advise Co-development | 14,848 | – |
| Interpreting & Translation Costs | 209 | 1,000 |
| Interviews With Women | 1,134 | – |
| Maintenance | – | – |
| Marketing & Promotions | 4,703 | 3,972 |
| Project Management Costs | – | 45,228 |
| Sessional Expenses | 29,013 | 9,673 |
| Venue Hire | 1,912 | 8,633 |
| | 74,736 | 75,547 |
| Depreciation and Amortisation Expenses | 1,320 | 598 |
| Total Expenditure | 984,134 | 801,527 |
| Net surplus/ (deficit) attributable to the association | 89,981 | (41,925) |

The financial information contained in this annual report has been extracted from the Association's statutory financial report for the year ended 30 June 2017 as audited by Collins & Co.

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



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

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