

7 September 2026

## **CALL FOR COMMITMENT TO FOUR PRIORITY AREAS TO ADDRESS FAMILY VIOLENCE FOR MIGRANT AND REFUGEE COMMUNITIES.**

To the leaders of political parties across Victoria,

### **RE: Strengthening safety, recovery and equity for women and children from a migrant and refugee background, subjected to family violence.**

Ahead of the 2026 Victorian State Election, intouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, Wellsprings for Women, the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights and the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health urge all political parties to commit to urgent policy reforms that improve safety, wellbeing, economic security and equitable access to services for women and children from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

As part of the family violence prevention and response sector, our organisations support the Safe and Equal 2026 Victorian Election priorities and the sector's collective call for sustained action to prevent and respond to family violence. In addition, we highlight specific recommendations from multicultural organisations to address the unique and intersecting barriers experienced by women and children from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Family violence remains one of the most significant drivers of gender inequality and harm in Victoria. Our organisations are calling on all political parties and candidates to commit to targeted reforms that address the unique barriers faced by migrant and multicultural communities subjected to family violence, including housing and visa insecurity, financial hardship, and limited access to culturally responsive services.

Together, we call on the Victorian Government to commit to four priority areas as part of the 2026 State Election agenda.

### **Priority Area 1: Sustained investment in specialist multicultural services**

Women and children from refugee and migrant backgrounds often seek support from, or are referred to, specialist multicultural family violence services that understand the intersection of gender-based violence, culture, migration, settlement experiences and systemic disadvantage, including racism and discrimination.

These services provide culturally responsive safety planning, risk assessment, case management, advocacy, sector development, and community engagement. However, they continue to operate in an environment characterised by growing demand, workforce shortages, and funding uncertainty. To ensure effective responses for multicultural communities, service delivery should be driven by the needs of clients and communities, with investment focused on improving wellbeing, strengthening inclusion, and achieving equitable outcomes.

### **Key Actions**

- Provide long-term, recurrent and adequate resourcing for specialist multicultural family violence services, including expanded capacity to support migrant and refugee children and young people and communities in regional and rural areas. Funding should include a dedicated

prevention component that recognises and supports the prevention work already undertaken by specialist services, with tailored investment in culturally responsive prevention programs for women.

- Commit to adequate and sustainable funding for diverse communities that is proportionate to their representation within Victoria's population and addresses current disparities in resource allocation.
- Strengthen collaboration and referral pathways between specialist multicultural family violence services and housing providers, ensuring migrant and refugee women can access safe, culturally responsive refuge, crisis and transitional housing in a timely and coordinated way.
- Invest in specialist multicultural services' workforce growth, capability development and training.
- Increase funding for community-led prevention and early intervention initiatives, including working with men who use or are at risk of using violence.
- Delivering community-led education and awareness activities to support the introduction of the new coercive control legislation.
- Invest in stronger connections between specialist multicultural family violence services and sexual assault services to build models of support that are reflective of the needs of migrant and refugee communities.

## **Priority Area 2: Stronger, collaborative pathways to safety**

Women and children who do not hold permanent residency in Australia face additional systemic barriers when seeking support for family violence. Alongside the many challenges associated with resettlement, they often encounter heightened risks due to exclusion from financial supports and services that lack cultural responsiveness and understanding.

Without access to targeted specialist support, victim-survivors may experience delays in accessing protection and safety. As a result, many remain in unsafe situations due to fears of homelessness, separation from family and children, and adverse immigration consequences.

The Victorian Government should strengthen pathways to safety by ensuring women from a migrant and refugee background can access timely, culturally responsive and integrated support, regardless of their migration status.

### **Key Actions**

- Strengthen pathways into safe crisis accommodation and long-term housing and establish a dedicated housing waitlist pathway for victim-survivors awaiting permanent residency.
- Expand access to specialist family violence case management and risk assessment services.
- Increase the co-location of culturally responsive legal assistance and migration-related support within mainstream family violence services.
- Improve access to family violence informed interpreters and translated information across all family violence responses.

- Enhance cross-sector collaboration between family violence, sexual assault, housing, settlement, justice, health and other allied services including mental health and alcohol and drug services.
- Support community-based outreach initiatives and partnerships that engage women who may not access mainstream services.

### **Priority Area 3: Victim-Survivor led recovery and rebuilding**

Safety is only the first step in a victim-survivor's journey. Ongoing support is essential to help individuals recover from trauma, rebuild their lives, achieve financial independence and strengthen social connections. Recovery support is a form of prevention, and these outcomes are critical to long-term safety, wellbeing and independence.

Recovery and rebuilding can be particularly challenging for women and children who have experienced migration-related hardship, social isolation, housing insecurity and limited access to community and support services. Current funding and service models often prioritise crisis responses over long-term recovery, economic empowerment and social inclusion.

#### **Key Actions**

- Expand access to trauma-informed and culturally responsive counselling and therapeutic supports, both formal and informal, including community and group-based wellbeing activities.
- Increase investment in culturally responsive recovery programs and peer support initiatives.
- Ensure children and young people affected by family violence can access culturally responsive recovery supports tailored to their age and developmental needs.
- Strengthen pathways to education and employment for victim-survivors, including the recognition of qualifications and professional experience obtained overseas.
- Fund programs that promote financial capability, secure accommodation and housing, financial coaching and economic independence.

### **Priority Area 4: Preventing violence against women and children**

All communities in Victoria have a role to play in preventing violence against women and children. It is essential that, alongside response programs, there is a long-term investment into the primary prevention of violence, ensuring that multicultural communities are not left behind.

Migrant and refugee women and their representative organisations hold essential specialist expertise, experience and community trust. They play a vital role in building capacity within multicultural organisations and communities, ensuring that communities are positively and effectively engaged, that effort is coordinated, and that practice wisdom is retained and shared across Victoria.

#### **Key Actions**

- Sustain and increase investment in tailored primary prevention programs for multicultural communities.
- Strengthen migrant and refugee women's organisations to enable them to play a leadership role in primary prevention within multicultural communities.
- Fund programs that engage migrant and refugee men in primary prevention activity, through the leadership of migrant and refugee women.

- Fund tailored and evidence-based programs that engage migrant and refugee young people in primary prevention, through the leadership of young women.

Meaningful action on these priorities is needed to ensure that all women and children, regardless of their cultural background or migration status, can live free from violence and participate fully in Victorian society.

Together, our organisations are advocating for the needs and voices of women and children from refugee and migrant backgrounds to be placed at the centre of policy development, advocacy and decision-making. We hope that our collective position fosters the building of a culturally responsive and safe family violence system in Victoria.

We urge all political parties to publicly commit to our priorities ahead of the 2026 Victorian State Election and welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how these can be translated into meaningful action.

**Please contact Tania Farha at [taniaf@intouch.org.au](mailto:taniaf@intouch.org.au) to arrange a meeting.**

Yours sincerely,



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