

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21



A vital connection for migrant women

# Always was, always will be

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) is proud to acknowledge that the land to which we migrated, and on which we work and live, was and always will be Aboriginal land. We pay our respects to the elders and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, on whose land our offices are located, and to all First Nations people, cultures, and connections to Country and waterways.

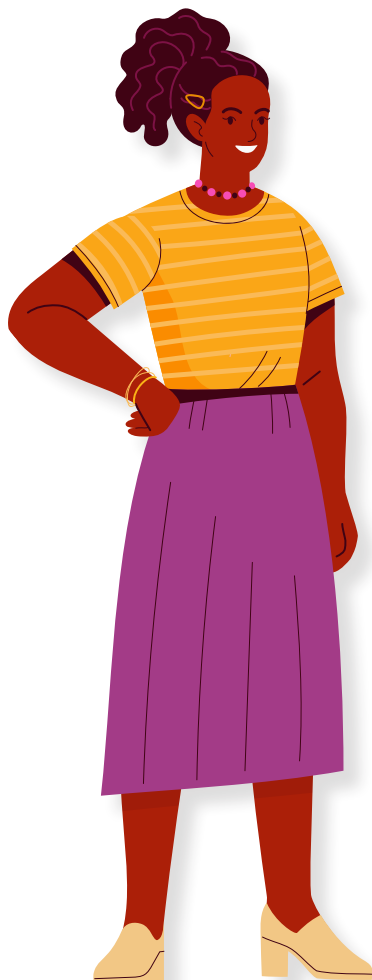
## Who we represent

MCWH is proud to stand for the rights to health and safety of all migrant and refugee women living in Australia including trans women, and non-binary people, and including temporary migrants, permanent residents, asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, migrants with citizenship and people who identify generationally as part of a migrant community, or who are subjected to intersecting forms of discrimination.

## About Multicultural Centre for Women's Health

MCWH is a national, community-based organisation, led by and for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Our vision is to be the national voice for the wellbeing of migrant and refugee women in Australia, and we are committed to advancing their health and wellbeing through:

- ▶ multilingual education
- ▶ advocacy
- ▶ social action
- ▶ research
- ▶ capacity building



## Our Approach

*Intersectional  
Migrant women-led  
Evidence-based  
Collaborative*

# A message from the Board Chair

## Dr Tamara Kwarteng

From the beginning of the pandemic, MCWH transformed our service delivery to online and other platforms, ensuring that we could continue to promote migrant and refugee women's health and wellbeing, even though we were not able to deliver face to face programs.

MCWH's work was more relevant and needed than ever, responding to the increasing incidence of COVID-19 in migrant and refugee communities throughout the Victorian outbreaks. As the vaccine education rollout started in earnest, our work in providing tailored, in-language education to women who would otherwise not have access to meaningful information, became life-saving.

Our advocacy in this area was also significant, promoting the leadership of migrant women, and the importance of bilingual health education in building health literacy and equity.

I am so proud of the ground-breaking WOMHEn project, which enabled the establishment of a state-wide infrastructure to deliver in-language health education across Victoria. MCWH's coordination and capacity role meant that we were able to share our 43-year strong expertise in bilingual education with our women's health partners.

This year, in amongst the crisis response, we have also taken the time to step back for a reflective moment and develop MCWH's new Strategic Plan. The Plan takes into account the growing need for MCWH's work nationally, as well as the new directions that COVID-19 and other changes have presented to us. The new Plan will extend our work into new areas, respond to the community's increasing use of digital technology, and our changing demographics.



# Message from the Executive Director

## Dr Adele Murdolo

MCWH's success is dependent on our partners, and this year we were so pleased to continue and extend some wonderful collaborations. The WOMHEn project, which established a multilingual health education infrastructure across Victoria, based on MCWH's health education program, is the wonderful outcome of our long-term relationships with Victorian Women's Health Services and Gender Equity Victoria.

In the area of gendered violence, we worked together with migrant women's organisations, multicultural services and workplaces to embed intersectional approaches into the prevention of violence against women. We provided 15 gender and cross-cultural training sessions and three specialist Communities of Practice, so that over 250 participants had the knowledge and tools to make their practice responsive and accessible. This work also enabled us to identify resource gaps and needs, and in response, develop a series of excellent resources, including the *'Challenging Myths'* Guide and intersectionality resources for workplaces.

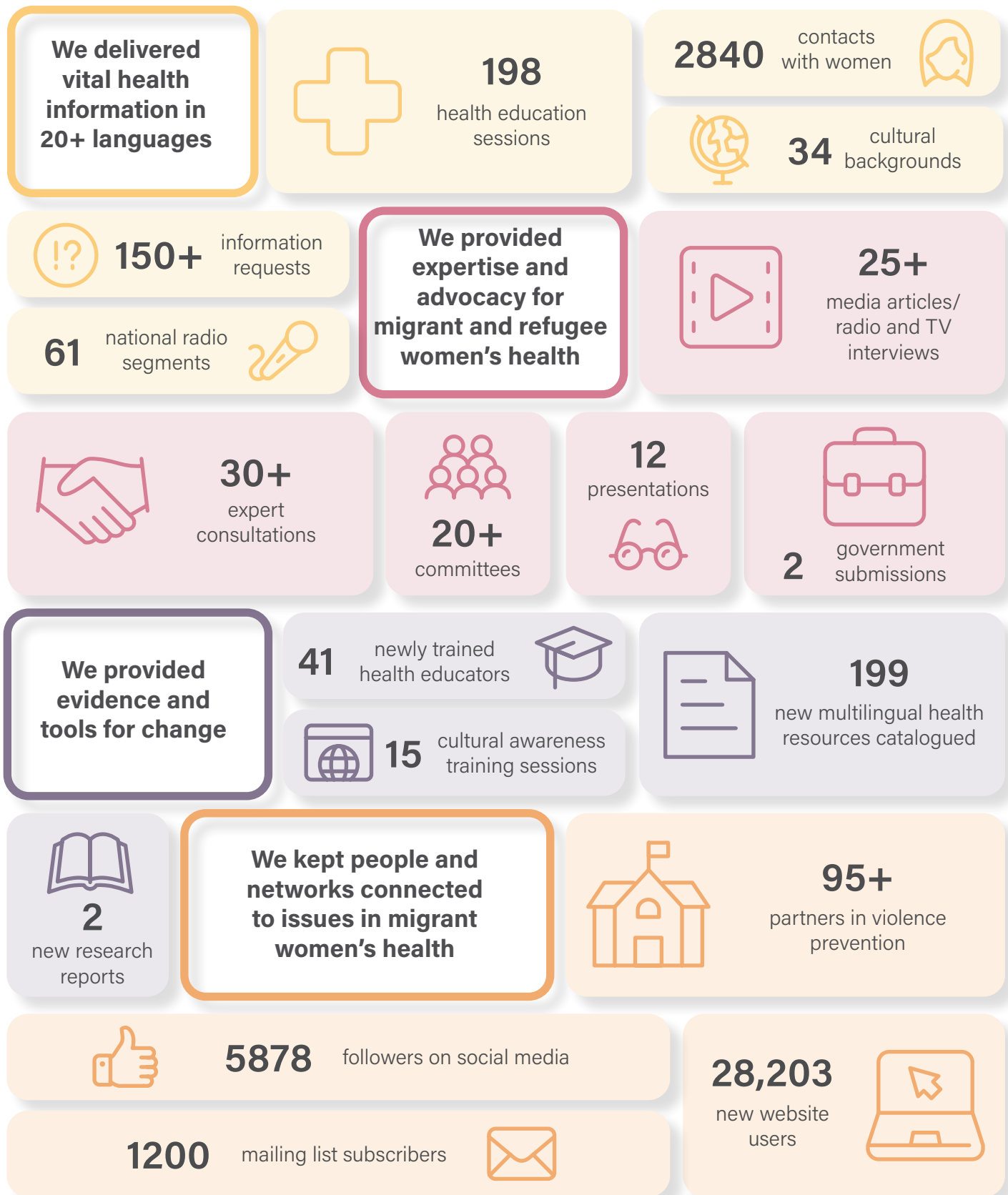
In the area of health education, our partnerships with multicultural organisations, workplaces, English language schools, health promotion organisations and migrant women themselves have enabled the delivery of 198 health education sessions and 61 radio programs on a range of health topics, including COVID-19, vaccination, women's health, family violence and mental health.

This has been a challenging year for migrant and refugee women. We know that nevertheless, they remain at the centre of their families' and communities' health and wellbeing. We thank them for their resilience, persistence and leadership, for the impact they have in the community, and for always guiding MCWH's work.



# A vital connection for migrant women: 2020–21 snapshot

This year MCWH has provided a crucial service by connecting migrant women to timely and appropriate COVID-19 and other health information, culturally responsive services, policy makers, and one another.



## How we connected in 2020-21

We worked on 16 targeted projects to achieve specific outcomes for migrant and refugee women and their communities.



Public  
Housing  
Initiative



Stillbirth  
Prevention  
Education



Hand in Hand  
support for  
carers



Getting Equal  
gender equality  
workshops



COVID-19  
vaccination  
education



Health education  
for women from  
countries where  
FGM/C occurs



Making the links for  
migrant women in  
regional Victoria  
experiencing family  
violence



Equality@Work  
partnership with  
Mercy Care



WOMHEN  
multicultural  
health educator  
training



Capacity building  
for ethno-specific  
organisations on  
violence prevention



Women's Health  
Services capacity  
building in violence  
prevention



PACE Leadership  
Program for  
migrant women



Safety and  
Support in  
My Language  
family violence  
education



Mental Health  
Advocacy

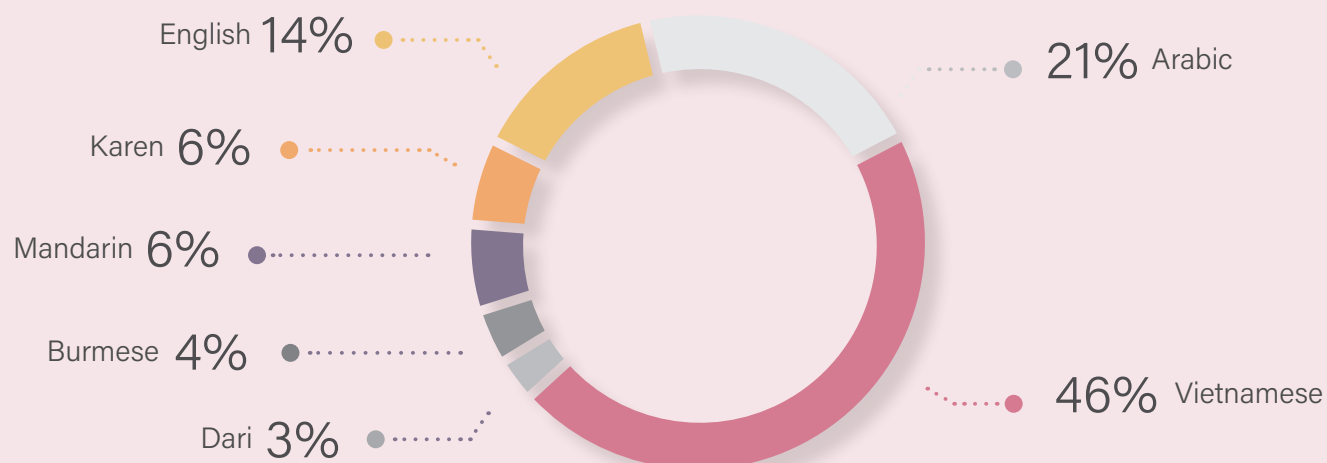


Multifait  
violence  
prevention  
project

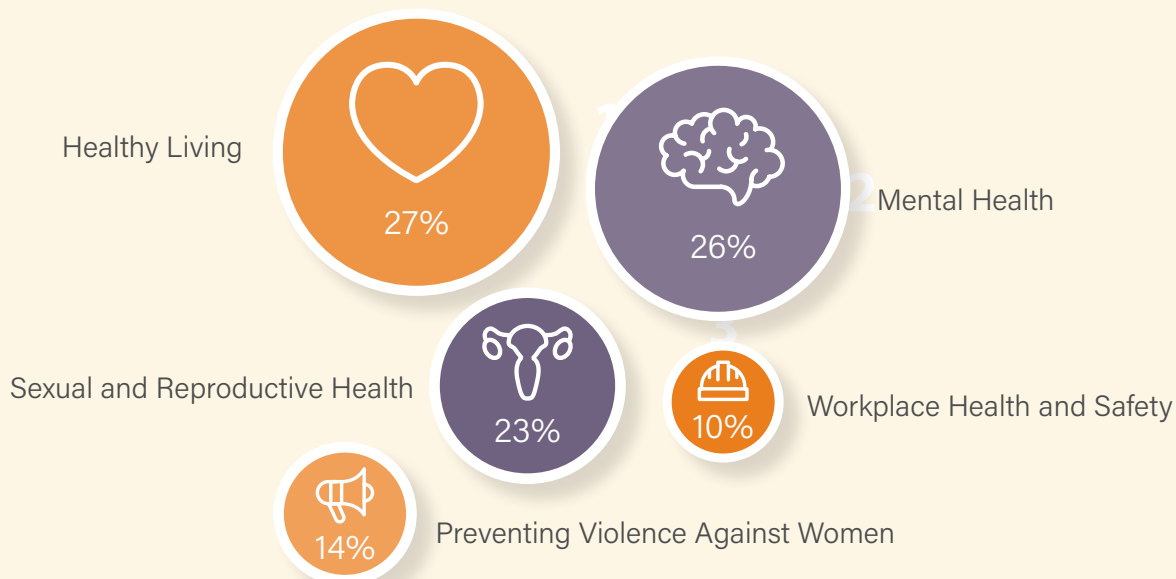


Research on  
international  
students'  
experiences of  
sexual violence

## Top seven languages for health education



## Priority topics for women



Before connecting with MCWH had you received information on these topics in your own language?

87%

Never

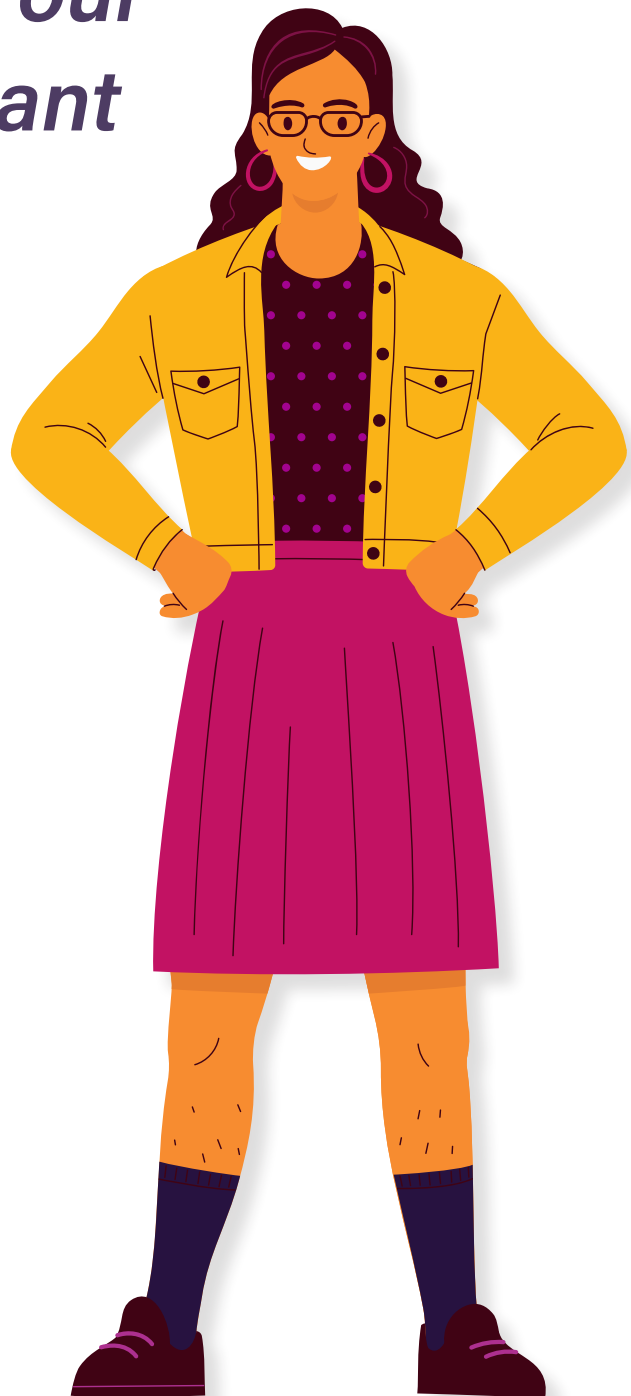
11%

A little

2%

A lot

*This year our organisation  
was highly commended for  
**Excellence in Health** by  
the Victorian Multicultural  
Commission, for **our  
work with migrant  
women during  
COVID-19***



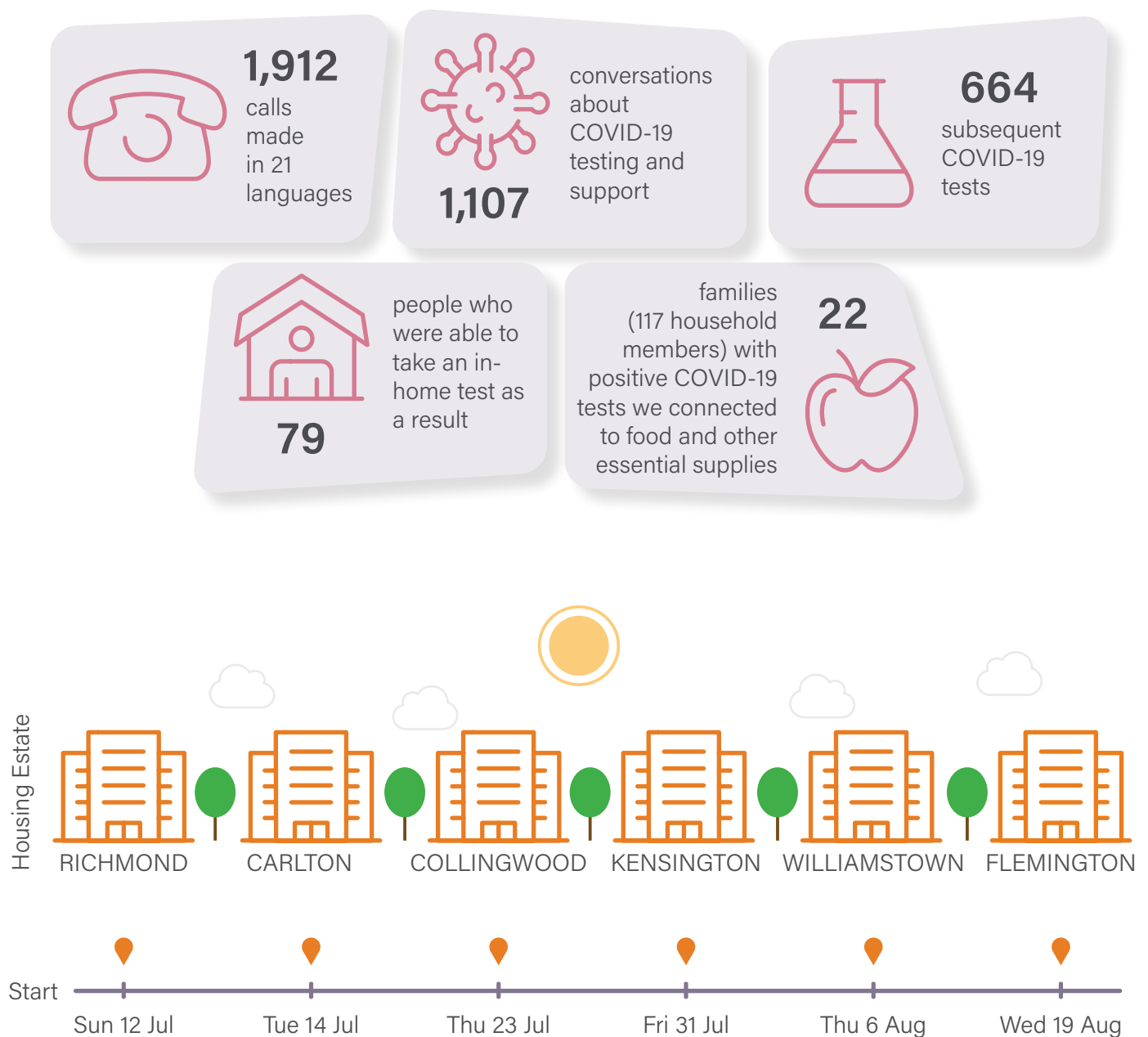
# A life-saving connection for migrant women in lockdown

## Emergency Public Housing Initiative

The lockdown of nine public housing estates in Victoria was challenging for its residents, particularly those whose preferred language was not English. The MCWH Education Team mobilised rapidly to contact public housing residents by telephone in their preferred language to speak with them about COVID-19 and testing, and listen to women's health concerns, offering further support if needed.

Phone calls coincided with pop-up COVID-19 testing clinics at each public housing estate. As a result of our calls, residents were able to take in-home tests and receive further assistance. Requests arising from our phone calls came from families who lived both in and out of public housing, some of whom tested positive for COVID-19 and needed immediate support.

The Public Housing Initiative was conducted in partnership with the Office for Housing, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. We are grateful for the support of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services to undertake this vital work.

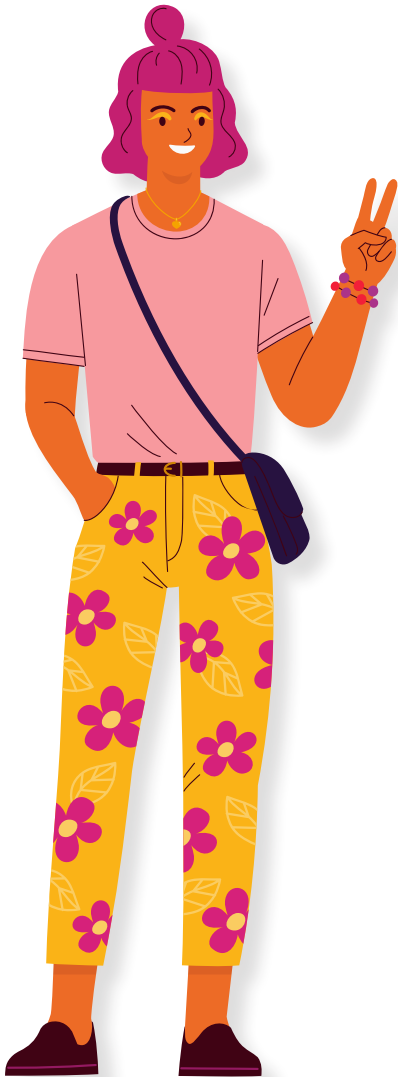




## Priority education for multicultural communities

Beyond the emergency Public Housing Initiative, we continued to deliver COVID-19 information sessions as part of a priority response for multicultural communities, as well as COVID-19 vaccination information and education, with support from the Department of Health Victoria and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Victoria.

MCWH continues to assist the COVID-19 vaccination rollout through our health education program and dedicated projects delivered across Victoria, and to advocate for the rights of migrant and refugee women for equal access to accurate and appropriate multilingual health information and support for a full COVID-19 recovery in the years ahead.



**“After attending this session, I feel more *confident* to make the right decision about receiving this vaccine as *now I am aware* that it’s safe and effective and share information with my *community*.”**

**“Before the session, I have decided not to take the vaccine because I was *worried* about its complications. After attending this session, I *realised* that it’s a safe vaccine and it is effective.”**

**“Before attending this session, I *used to think* that the vaccine is unsafe, and I was not sure about having it. This session has *changed* my attitude, as the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, and the incidence of the complications is extremely rare.”**

## Keeping migrant women on the policy agenda

COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted migrant and refugee women. MCWH strongly advocated to federal and state governments to take action on the views and needs of migrant and refugee women, particularly in relation to COVID-19 pandemic response, information and recovery.

In July 2020, Executive Director Dr Adele Murdolo made a statement titled, *It’s time to listen to migrant women*, which received endorsement from 27 organisations.

Other advocacy this year included membership in the Commonwealth Department of Health Primary Care Division CALD Communities COVID-19 Health Advisory Group and consultation with the Victorian Government.

# An expert connection for health educators across Victoria

All our training programs are designed to support the health workforce to effectively connect with migrant and refugee women. This includes:

- ▶ Cross-cultural training
- ▶ Gender equality training
- ▶ Intersectionality training
- ▶ Multicultural Women's Health Educator training

In addition, our PACE Leadership Program connects migrant women with knowledge and tools to build on their own strengths through participation, advocacy, communication and engagement.

A highlight of the year was the WOMHEn project funded by the Working for Victoria initiative.

The WOMHEn project employed and trained migrant and refugee women to form a rapid response health workforce delivering COVID-19 information and health education to migrant and refugee women across Victoria in over 20 languages.

MCWH adapted our accredited Multicultural Women's Health Educator training program for online delivery, allowing us to train and prepare 42 multilingual health educators to operate across regional and metropolitan Victoria, reaching out to more migrant women than ever.

This six-month project has been hugely important in connecting migrant women across Victoria to vital COVID-19 information. Our ability to rapidly adapt our training program and coordinate the project with partners across ten sites was pivotal to its success.

42



accredited bilingual health  
training graduates

20+ languages



10 partner women's health  
organisations across Victoria

100%

health educators confident  
to deliver after training



“I am **learning** so much and being **equipped** with vast knowledge to pass onto the **community**.”

“I have **learned** more about **human rights and equal opportunities** through this training, I get more knowledge and I believe it's absolutely **helpful** to me and my **community**.”

“The training gave me ideas and **different ways** to talk about women's health. It is not just about giving them information about health but also to help **direct** them to the **expert** who can help them out.”

# A trusted connection for best practice to prevent violence

MCWH continues to drive important discussions and foster collaborative partnerships to prevent violence against migrant women across Australia.

Our Prevention of Violence Team offers training and education around gender equality and healthy relationships, builds leadership capacity for migrant women, runs prevention activities, campaigns and events, and brings prevention practitioners together to share resources, workshop effective strategies and support one another in specialist Communities of Practice.

This year we developed innovative resources to share our knowledge, keep practitioners connected and build the capacity of everyone working to prevent violence.



8  
projects



3  
Communities  
of Practice



1000+  
PVAW resource  
downloads

90+

Prevention Partners



## Making the Links podcast



4  
episodes



96  
downloads

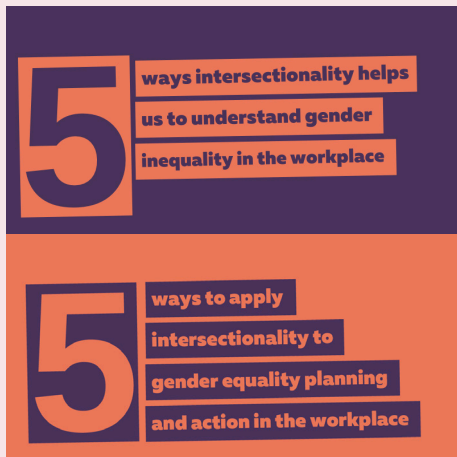


The ***Making the Links Podcast series*** is an innovative component of our Making the Links Project, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services through the Safer Pathways for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women Program.

Like the project, the podcast takes a regional focus and features conversations with experts and practitioners working with migrant women who have experienced family violence.

***"I finally got around to listening to your podcast. It's brilliant!!!! I really appreciated the discussion you generated, bringing a degree of straightforwardness to two very complex areas – patriarchy and culture. Are there more to come?"***

## Five ways intersectionality helps resources

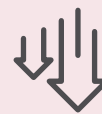


Our Equality@Work Project received additional funding from the Victorian Office for Women under the Free from Violence fund to develop two useful guides to support workplaces, organisations and policy makers to take an intersectional approach to implementing the new Gender Equality Act (March 2021). The resources provide [guidance on how intersectionality helps us to understand gender inequality in the workplace](#) and can strengthen gender equality planning and action in the workplace.

Featured on the website of the Victorian Commission for Gender Equality



**250+**  
downloads



## Challenging Myths guide



[Challenging myths about culture and violence in migrant and refugee](#) communities is an outcome of our Safer and Stronger Communities Pilot. The project was funded by the Victorian government and conducted in partnership with Our Watch, InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence and five organisations to prevent violence with migrant and refugee communities. Building on the learnings from the project, it is a practical and accessible tool for anyone who wants to challenge some of the harmful ways people sometimes use cultural background or identity to explain, excuse or blame violence.

**500+**  
downloads



**“So, so good to finally *be able to have the words* to point to and use when confronted with cultural *excuses for violence.*”**

## A clear connection between research and policy

Our work across research, advocacy and policy this year has powerfully demonstrated the connection between broader policies and systems and their impacts on the health of migrant women and their communities.



**2**

policy  
submissions

**12+** presentations



**20+** committees



**30+**

expert  
consultations

**25+**

media articles/radio and  
TV interviews



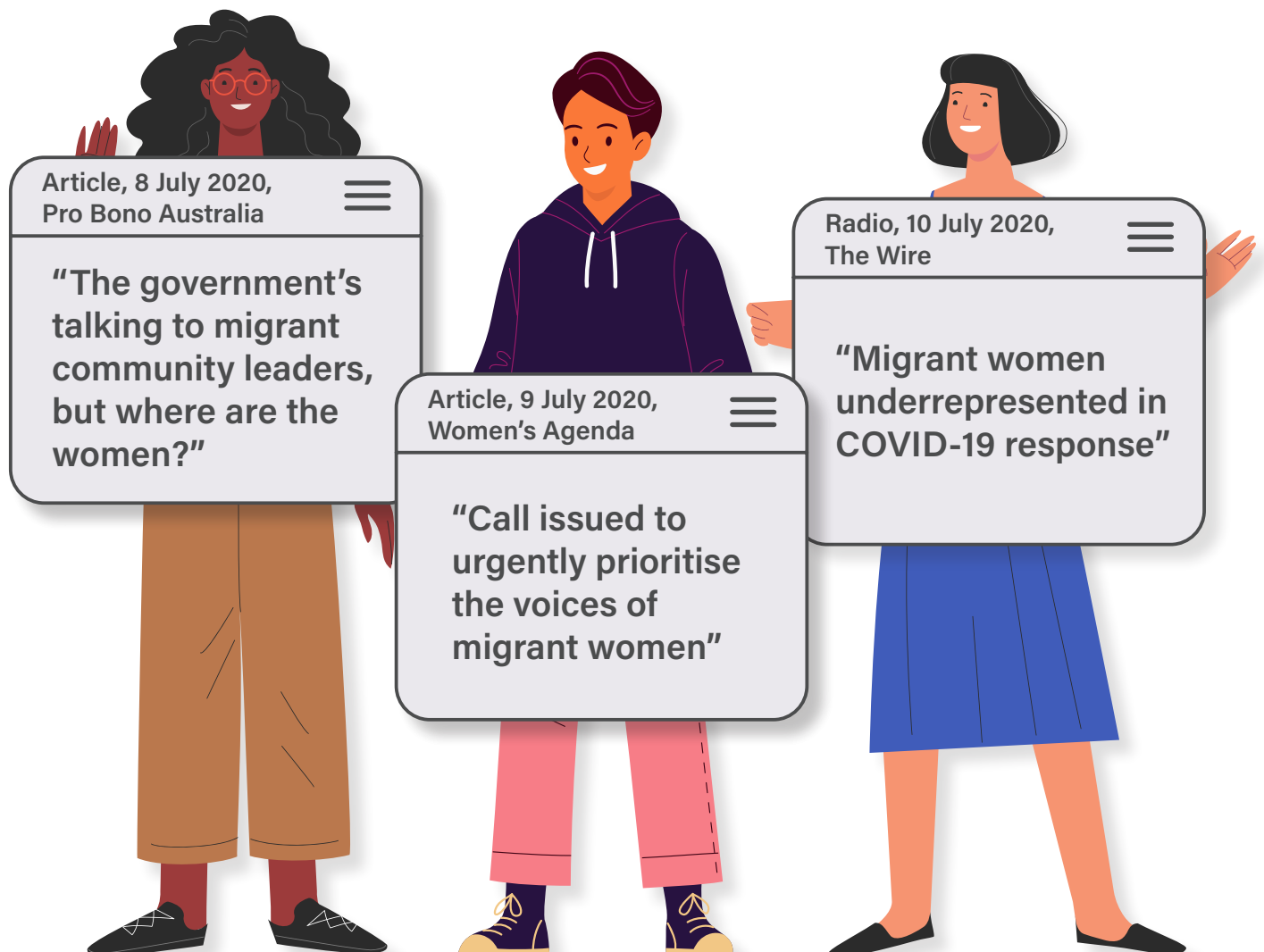
**2**

research  
reports

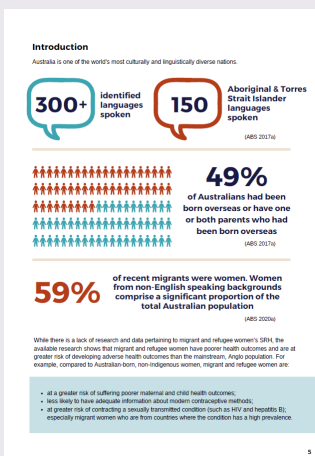


**1**

academic publication



## Sexual and Reproductive Health Data Report 2021



Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health, the Multicultural Women's Health Australia ***Sexual and Reproductive Health Data Report*** provides compelling evidence of the ongoing inequalities in migrant and refugee women's health outcomes.

The Report gives a comprehensive overview of the current research available in Australia, and clearly demonstrates the urgent need for further research, advocacy and policy input relating to migrant and refugee women's access to sexual and reproductive health services and information.

## Community Conversations Report



Developed in partnership with HealthWest and Centre for Multicultural Youth and based on 20 interviews conducted in Melbourne's West, the ***Community Conversations Report*** offers valuable insights and recommendations for policy makers to address the significant challenges faced by young people and women from migrant and refugee backgrounds when finding work.

## Migrant Women's Mental Health Advocacy

In recognition of the urgent need to understand and address the specific factors that impact migrant and refugee women's mental health, MCWH commissioned the ***Migrant and refugee women's mental health in Australia literature review***. Conducted by researchers from the University of Melbourne, School of Population and Global Health, the review formed the basis for developing the ***Immigrant and Refugee Women's Mental Health Policy Brief***, with recommendations for system reforms in light of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.



# Financial Summary

MCWH prepares financial statements in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards. The full Financial Statements for the Year Ending 30 June 2021, accompanying notes and Independent Auditor Report are available at <https://www.mcwh.com.au/wp-content/uploads/financials2>.



Summary Income Statement	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
<b>Income</b>		
Grant Funding	3,329,727	3,234,800
Other	630,801	476,417
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3,960,528</b>	<b>3,711,217</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Employee benefits expense	2,398,256	2,488,556
Other	904,311	692,435
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>3,302,567</b>	<b>3,180,991</b>
<b>Total comprehensive surplus for the year</b>	<b>657,961</b>	<b>530,226</b>
<b>Summay Balance Sheet</b>		
Cash	4,205,559	2,534,311
Receivables	79,715	206,184
Property, Plant & Equipment	16,614	35,728
Right of Use Assets (Property)	593,914	776,051
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>4,895,802</b>	<b>3,552,274</b>
Trade and other payables	610,188	289,429
Provisions	490,571	395,099
Income in Advance	1,681,577	1,031,716
Property Lease Liabilities	593,914	807,284
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>3,376,250</b>	<b>2,523,528</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>1,519,552</b>	<b>1,028,746</b>
<b>Current Ratio</b>	<b>1.51 : 1.0</b>	<b>1.53 : 1.0</b>

Total income for 2020-2021 financial year was \$3,960,528 compared to \$3,711,217 in the previous year. This includes an increase of 32% in Other Income and a 1.5% indexation increase in DHHS core funding.

Total expenditure was higher than the previous year, with a surplus of \$657,961. MCWH's current ratio of 1.51:1.0 reflects sufficient solvency to repay all current liabilities and has remained consistent to the previous year.

COVID-19 resulted in both unbudgeted savings and additional expenditure in the 2020-21 financial year. COVID-19 government subsidies are reflected in Other Income for both years.

Gender Equity Victoria (GenVic), which was previously auspiced by Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, is now operating independently. The portion of Net Assets attributable to its operations from 2017-2020 has been transferred to GenVic as at 30th June 2021.

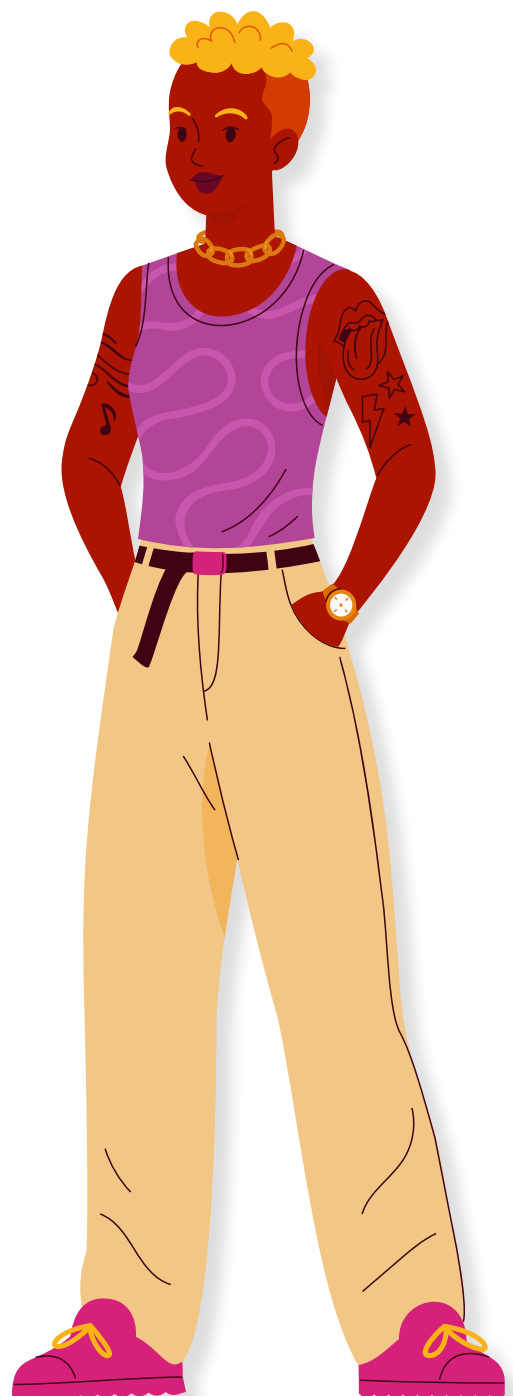
*MCWH is a **proud** member of **Gender Equity Victoria***

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*(**GEN VIC**), the peak body for gender equity, women's health, and prevention of violence against women.*

***Collaboration** is key to our work and we are **grateful** to be part of a **strong network** of Victorian Women's Health Services, and for the many organisations, services and individuals who we have **connected with this year.***

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# Acknowledgements

Thank you to our funders and partners and supporters.

## Funders

Australian Government Department of Health

Australian Government Department of Social Services

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Victoria

Department of Health Victoria

HealthWest Partnership

## Health promotion partners

DiverseWerks (My Health Record CALD Consumer Education)

Diabetes Victoria (in-language diabetes health education sessions)

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria Inc (review of translated *Are you safe at home?* resources)

Heart Foundation (in-language heart health education sessions)

Maribyrnong City Council (CALD Families Nutrition and Healthy Eating Seminars)

Monash Centre for Health Research and Implementation (MCHRI) (Maternal health education videos)

Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority (Your Fertility health promotion)

## Research partners

Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne

Rainbow Health, Latrobe University

Marie Stopes Australia

School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne

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Designed with love by Agent Morphe

