



MULTICULTURAL
CENTRE FOR
WOMEN'S HEALTH

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-22

EMPOWER



TRANSFORM



COLLABORATE



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, including trans women living in Australia. We include 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. We stand beside all people who face health inequity and seek a world free from all 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

Migrant and refugee women are free from all forms of discrimination, have autonomy over their lives, and experience health equity, wellbeing, and safety in society.

OUR PURPOSE

We advocate and educate to strengthen the health, wellbeing, safety and leadership of migrant and refugee women in Australia.

OUR APPROACH

Intersectional



Migrant women-led



Evidence-based



Collaborative



From the Board Chair



DR TAMARA KWARTENG

We developed our 2022-26 Strategic Plan in 2021, with a vision of extending our work, in particular our successful and effective model of peer education and support, beyond Victoria to the rest of Australia. We believed that migrant women in other parts of the country could benefit from the experience and expertise that MCWH has developed over the last 44 years. Barely three months into the implementation of the new strategic plan, we were delighted to be funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health to work with partners in every state and territory to deliver COVID-19 education using our peer education and support model.

The new national program is just one of the pieces of evidence, along with numerous invitations for consultation with policy makers, health and research organisations, that tell us that our knowledge, expertise and experience is increasingly acknowledged and sought out by local, state and federal government, media and other key health organisations and researchers across Australia.

We thank the Victorian State Government for their partnership and the expansion of the support they have provided to us to continue and expand our health education across the State. We are also grateful to the Commonwealth Government for enabling us to extend our work nationally and excited for the new partnerships and collaborations we have developed across the country.

These achievements have been made possible by the dedicated and hard-working women of MCWH, under the excellent leadership of our Executive Director, Adele Murdolo. On behalf of the Board our deep gratitude goes to Adele and the team for their vision, commitment and energy.

From the Executive Director



DR ADELE MURDOLO

This has been a year of immense growth at MCWH, which has brought our signature health education model to an unprecedented national scale and provided opportunities to both broaden and deepen our partnerships across Australia.

Our health education team delivered **510** in-language education sessions on a range of key health topics, including gender equality, mental health, COVID-19, sexual and reproductive health and preventing family violence, reaching over **6,500** women in person and online.

The WOMHEn project, run in partnership with ten Victorian Women's Health Services, demonstrated the power of collaboration and significantly increased migrant and refugee women's access to health information across the state. In just one year, MCWH trained, coordinated and resourced **50** new health educators to more effectively connect with migrant and refugee women in their regions.

The newly established Health in My Language project, which began in March 2022, extends this successful model nationally, and we have trained and will coordinate another **44** health educators to deliver in-language COVID-19 education in each state and territory, with the support of national partners.

These landmark projects rely heavily on the skills and capabilities of migrant and refugee women. They demonstrate how MCWH enables migrant women to empower and transform their communities and the organisations they work for. Thank you to all the staff, board members, partner organisations, community leaders and participants who have helped us to achieve so much for migrant women's health this year.



Strategic Plan 2022-26

This year we developed a new four-year **Strategic Plan**. It has a strong vision: migrant and refugee women are free from all forms of discrimination, have autonomy over their lives, and experience health equity, wellbeing, and safety in society. We approach this vision with a renewed purpose: we advocate and educate to strengthen the health, wellbeing, safety and leadership of migrant and refugee women in Australia. We look forward to sharing our achievements.

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health Strategic Plan 2022-26

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OUR VISION

Migrant and refugee women are **free** from all forms of discrimination, have **autonomy** over their lives, and experience **health equity, wellbeing, and safety** in society.

OUR PURPOSE

We **advocate** and **educate** to strengthen the health, wellbeing, safety and leadership of migrant and refugee women in Australia.

OUR APPROACH

-  Intersectional
-  Evidence-based
-  Migrant women-led
-  Collaborative

OUR IMPACT GOALS

Empower

We will develop, share, and deliver programs to empower a broader diversity of migrant and refugee women, including through new technologies.

Transform

We will work together with migrant and refugee women to raise awareness and conduct research, build evidence and advocate to transform society.

Collaborate

We will partner with workplaces, services, and organisations to increase health access and equity for migrant and refugee women.

OUR IMPACT AREAS

Advancing **sexual and reproductive health and rights**

Improving **mental health and wellbeing**

Supporting **COVID-19** recovery

Enhancing **workplace health and wellbeing**

Preventing violence against women and children

OUR ORGANISATIONAL GOALS

Sustainability for our organisation

National influence and leadership



Reconciliation Action Plan

MCWH launched its first **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)**, which formally marks a commitment on behalf of the organisation to reflect on and strengthen our understanding and connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and rights. During National Reconciliation Week, our RAP working group conducted an organisation-wide staff survey to evaluate our collective understanding of colonialism and First Nations health, history and experiences of inequity and injustice. The results will meaningfully inform capacity building and next steps.

*"My artwork 'Ngaya, nginda, ngiyani Australian' (I, you, we Australian) aims to reflect **the cultural diversity amongst women in Australia** and recognise the impact that teaching and sharing our cultures have in **strengthening our communities and working towards reconciliation.**"*

– Gamilaroi Yuwaalaraay artist Jessica Tedim.



Felicia and Lina

Two years ago, Felicia met Lina. Lina was afraid of getting COVID-19 and was also scared of the vaccine after hearing stories from her friends about the terrible side effects, so she isolated herself at home. Noticing her absence from the community, Felicia attempted to ease her vaccine fears, but Lina was certain the vaccine would harm her, so she remained cut off, lonely and depressed.

This year, Felicia joined the MCWH Team as part of the Health in My Language project, which trained her to deliver bilingual health education to address vaccine hesitancy in migrant communities. Equipped with new skills and greater knowledge, Felicia called Lina again. Not only did Felicia convince Lina to get both doses, but Lina also told all friends about Felicia and they all want to meet her and learn about the vaccine.

“When I started working with the **Health in My Language** program, I got a better insight and understanding of COVID-19. I was now **equipped** with more knowledge on COVID-19 and rigorous training. I **contacted** Lina by phone a few times and eventually convinced her to get vaccinated!” - Felicia

“I was **isolated at home**, sick, unhappy and helpless because of the **fear of COVID-19**. If it weren't for Felicia, I would still be there, dying slowly alone. My life is now better, I feel more **confident** thanks to Felicia.” - Lina



Our Impact Areas

This year, in addition to our renowned **bilingual health education program** MCWH implemented 22 projects and programs to achieve specific outcomes for migrant and refugee women and their communities.



ADVANCING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

Reducing stillbirth risk through in-language education

Researching international students' experiences of sexual violence

Providing accredited bilingual health educator training



IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Advocating for more inclusive mental health services

Highlighting the links between racism and mental health

Providing intersectionality training to service providers



SUPPORTING COVID-19 RECOVERY

Resourcing a multilingual health education workforce

Sharing multilingual vaccine information and education

Creating and promoting in-language COVID-19 resources



PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND PROMOTING GENDER EQUITY

Bringing organisations together to learn and share best practices

Making the links between regional services and migrant communities

Providing gender equality workshops for migrant women online



PROMOTING MIGRANT WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND EXPERTISE

Promoting youth-led solutions to online violence

Facilitating the PACE Women's Leadership Course and Network

Supporting community-led responses to FGM/C

2021-22 in Numbers

We empowered migrant and refugee women



Health education

803 sessions in 20 languages
7500 livestream listeners
11967 contacts made
48 cultural backgrounds



Multilingual resources

203 new library items
350 online information requests
4600 catalogue searches in 29 languages
6,500 resource downloads



Leadership and training

12 Communities Leading Change participants across Australia
85 PACE Leadership Program graduates
65 accredited multilingual health educator graduates

We worked to increase health equity and access



Building the evidence

6 research collaborations
6 government submissions
2 public hearings



Raising awareness

16 media features
676 training participants
1700 eNewsletter subscribers
8,164 followers on social media
26,000 website users



Sharing our expertise

28 committees
24 presentations
2 national conferences
12 expert consultations

We collaborated to increase access for migrant women

17



national partners working to end Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)

14



members across Victoria in the Action for Gender Equality Partnership (AGEP)

7



national partners in the Multicultural Women's Health Australia (MWA) Network

90+



Victorian organisations Communities of Practice on violence prevention

Languages most commonly requested in 2021-22



Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Chinese, Dari, English, Farsi, Filipino, Greek, Hakha Chin, Hindi, Indonesian, Karen, Mandarin, Nepalese, Oromo, Punjabi, Russian, Samoan, Sinhalese, Somali, Swahili, Tamil, Tigrigna, Tongan, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese.



Empowering migrant and refugee women

MATERNAL HEALTH EDUCATION PROJECT

Reducing migrant and refugee women's risk of stillbirth

42

online sessions

14

women's groups

3600

women reached

With funding and support from the Stillbirth Centre for Research Excellence, MCWH is working to ensure that migrant and refugee women have access to information about ways to reduce the risk of stillbirth. In 2021, we delivered 42 online education sessions to 14 women's groups in seven languages, reaching around 3,600 women in total. In 2022, we conducted focus group discussions with Arabic, Karen, Dari and Dinka-speaking women, to inform the co-design of stillbirth prevention and care resources for migrant and refugee communities in Australia.

“Before the session, I used to think that if I feel *healthy*, I do not have to visit *my doctor* if I want to plan for pregnancy. This *session has changed my attitude* as planning for pregnancy will give *better outcomes* for me and for the baby.”

SHARING COVID-19 VACCINE INFORMATION

Increasing migrant and refugee communities' COVID-19 vaccine confidence

78

education sessions

90%

of participants who had not received vaccines before the session said they would like to book vaccination for themselves and/or their family members once they are eligible.

1071

contacts

With funding from the Victorian Government, MCWH continued to share evidence-based COVID-19 vaccine information with migrant and refugee women. We designed tailored education for women who were pregnant and/or parenting young children and delivered 78 in-language sessions, making 1071 total contacts with people from Vietnamese, Chinese, Sri Lankan, Indian, Afghani, Iraqi and Syrian backgrounds. We also engaged Vaccine Advisors to support the Chinese, Vietnamese and Filipino communities. They delivered a further 38 in-language information sessions, produced seven video resources and shared regular updates across five social media accounts.



PACE Women's Leadership Program

Migrant and refugee women leading the way

136

PACE network members

85

PACE graduates in 2021-22

20+

training sessions and events

In 2021-22, our PACE (Participate, Advocate, Communicate, Engage) Leadership Program delivered five FAST PACE workshops and three full PACE programs to 85 migrant and refugee women. PACE also collaborated with Jobs Victoria to deliver a creative writing workshop linking participants with a Jobs Advocate.

PACE is funded by the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing until 2023.

Participants told us that at the end of the 5-day PACE Leadership Program:

96%

had learned a new skill

91%

had more confidence to make decisions in their life

96%

wanted to join the PACE network

“[W]e went to [another organisation’s] training session and came out with nothing. They spoke so fast and didn’t know how to make it *relevant to our needs*. Instead, you make it *meaningful for migrant and multicultural communities*...I hope this program gets refunded because

thousands of migrant women will benefit.”



Transforming society to end inequality

In 2021-22, we contributed to national conversations and policy relating to migrant and refugee women's sexual and reproductive health, mental health, safety and access to services. We have raised awareness, shared our expertise, and built the evidence base to increase migrant and refugee women's visibility and leadership in policy decisions.



ADVOCACY AND POLICY INPUT IN 2021-22

- Evidence given in the [Inquiry into Victoria's Criminal Justice System](#) Public Hearings
- Joint submission made to the [Inquiry into Economic Equality for Women](#)
- Advocacy Brief developed for the [All Together in Prevention and Response Project](#)
- Joint Statement made by the [2021 National Women's Safety Summit delegates representing the rights and interests of migrant and refugee women](#)
- Submission made to the [Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Support Needs for Older Victorians from Migrant and Refugee Backgrounds](#)
- Joint Submission made and evidence given to [Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Support Needs for Older Victorians from Migrant and Refugee Backgrounds](#)

KEY CONSULTATIONS AND COMMITTEES

- Commonwealth Department of Health Ministerial Advisory Committee on Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections
- The University of Newcastle consultation on the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health
- Rainbow Health Victoria Pride in Prevention LGBTI Family Violence Prevention Project Advisory Group
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: National Maternity Data Development Advisory Group

Sexual and Reproductive Health Data Report launch and webinar



downloaded
460
times since
launch



200+
attendees and
141
subsequent views



On 4 August 2021, to mark the release of our **Sexual and Reproductive Health Data Report 2021** and accompanying **Act Now Paper**, MCWH held an online panel discussion about migrant and refugee women's sexual and reproductive health in Australia with experts in the field Dr. Nisha Khot, Bonney Corbin, Andrea Creado, Debaki Ashna and MCWH Chairperson Tamara Kwarteng. The former Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care introduced the webinar in a pre-recorded video.

You can watch the webinar online through our website. Visit www.mcwh.com.au

“The findings of the *SRH report* report reflects my experience in perinatal sexual and reproductive health: It is *critical* that people and families have *access* to maternity care that is *affordable, safe* and *culturally* responsive.”

PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

This year MCWH developed over 20 new resources, including translations into 11 languages of an explainer video about abortion, six COVID-19 video resources and fact sheets in many languages.




The *Making the Links Project* published a **Learnings Report** and video, featuring migrant and refugee women and service providers, to share significant learnings and recommendations for family violence services working with multicultural communities in regional and rural areas.

MCWH produced a new animated video on mental health tailored to migrant and refugee women from non-English speaking backgrounds. Informed by our **policy brief on migrant women's mental health**, the video shows that race and gender inequality, violence against women, settlement stress and trauma, and perinatal mental health, are particularly important mental health related issues for migrant women. The video is available in 11 languages.

Collaborating to increase health access and equity

ALL TOGETHER PROJECT

Bringing organisations together to share expertise

The All Together Project established an active Community of Practice, bringing together 20 Victorian multicultural, ethno-specific and faith-based organisations to share expertise and strengthen connections in preventing violence against women. Based on feedback and discussion, MCWH developed an [Advocacy Brief](#) with Whittlesea Community Connections and InTouch, to highlight the importance of, and systemic issues impacting, the multicultural and settlement services sector in supporting migrant and refugee women experiencing violence.

HEALTH IN MY LANGUAGE

Coordinating a national multilingual health education workforce

In March 2022, MCWH embarked on an ambitious national health education program for migrant and refugee communities, to increase vaccine confidence by providing accredited training and ongoing resourcing to 44 health educators to deliver in-language education across Australia. Funded by the Commonwealth Government, the project engaged partner organisations in every state and territory, and mobilised a national team of over 50 staff, to make health information accessible to more migrant and refugee communities nationwide. We look forward to working with our national partners and sharing the outcomes of the project in 2023.

National Partners

- Melaleuca Australia (NT)
- True Relationships and Reproductive Health (QLD)
- Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (NSW)
- Multicultural Hub Canberra and Regional NSW (ACT)
- Australian Red Cross (TAS & SA)
- Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services (WA)



Workforce of Multilingual Health Educators

A powerful collaborative effort across Victoria

50

multilingual
health
educators
trained

5422

migrant and
refugee women
reached

138

migrant and
refugee women
interviewed

Initially funded by the Working for Victoria initiative, and later by the Department of Fairness, Families and Housing (DFFH), the Workforce of Multilingual Health Educators (WOMHEn) project began in 2021, as a partnership of ten Victorian Women's Health Services jointly led by MCWH and Gender Equity Victoria. In a rapid six-month timeframe, we employed, trained and deployed a multilingual health education workforce of 50 migrant and refugee women to deliver COVID-19 related health information across Victoria.

The project was extended to run until July 2022 and delivered 293 sessions, reaching 5422 migrant and refugee women in 20 languages across Victoria with COVID-19 related health information.

Over the course of the project, educators conducted in-depth interviews with 138 migrant and refugee women, as documented in two reports, *Left Behind* and *Breaking the Barriers*, which detail the health experiences and challenges for migrant women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**“I have been here in Australia for almost 30 years,
I’ve never experienced any health education session *in language*,
and it is really *amazing* and very *informative*.”**



WOMHEn

Workforce of multilingual health educators

13



Financial summary

MCWH prepares financial statements in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards. The full Financial Statements for the Year Ending 30 June 2022, accompanying notes and Independent Auditor Report are available on the [MCWH website](#).



| Summary Income Statement | 2022 (\$) | 2021 (\$) |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Income | | |
| Grant Funding | 8,451,869 | 3,329,727 |
| Other income | 262,148 | 678,905 |
| Total Income | 8,714,017 | 4,008,632 |
| Expenditure | | |
| Employee benefits expense | 3,662,621 | 2,398,256 |
| Other | 4,624,836 | 952,414 |
| Total Expenditure | 8,287,457 | 3,350,670 |
| Total comprehensive surplus for the year | 426,560 | 657,962 |
| Summary Balance Sheet | | |
| Cash & Cash Equivalents | 8,147,728 | 4,205,646 |
| Receivables | 176,258 | 85,094 |
| Property, Plant & Equipment | 17,007 | 16,614 |
| Right of Use Assets (Property) | 477,078 | 593,914 |
| Total Assets | 8,818,071 | 4,901,268 |
| Trade and other payables | 1,551,291 | 610,275 |
| Provisions | 580,260 | 490,571 |
| Income in Advance | 4,220,157 | 1,686,956 |
| Property Lease Liabilities | 520,251 | 593,914 |
| Total Liabilities | 6,871,959 | 3,381,716 |
| Net Assets | 1,946,112 | 1,519,552 |
| Current Ratio | 1.30:1.0 | 1.5:1.0 |

Total income for 2021-2022 financial year was \$8,714,017 compared to \$3,960,528 in the previous year. This reflects additional funding received from the Victorian Department of Health towards MCWH's Health Promotion Initiatives, and three projects which MCWH led; Working for Victoria and the WOMHEn 2022 projects within the Women's Health Services sphere, and the Health in My Language National project to increase capacity for the provision of Health Education to Migrant and Refugee communities across all Australian States and Territories.

The increase in total expenditure reflects the expenses related to these projects. The reduction in other income reflects the cessation of the COVID-19 Job Keeper subsidy MCWH's current ratio of 1.3:1.0 reflects sufficient solvency to repay all current liabilities.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all our funders, partners and supporters, who make our work possible.

FUNDERS

Australian Research Council (through the University of Melbourne)

Australian Government

Victorian Government

Stillbirth Centre for Research Excellence

The eSafety Commissioner

HEALTH PROMOTION PARTNERS

Australian Centre of Prevention of Cervical Cancer

COTA Australia

Cultural Perspectives Group

Diabetes Victoria

The Heart Foundation

Red Nose Australia

Safe and Equal

SPHERE NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Sexual and Reproductive Health for Women in Primary Care

University of Melbourne

Victoria University

Women with Disabilities Victoria

HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM PARTNERS

Australian Vietnamese Women's Association

Dame Phyllis Frost Centre

Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities

Max Solution

Bendigo Community Health Services

Chinese Community Social Services Centre Inc

Wellways Australia

RESEARCH PARTNERS

Stillbirth Research Partnership

- Stillbirth Centre for Research Excellence
- Murdoch Children's Research Institute
- University of Sydney

INVEST Research Partnership Project

- Monash University School of Social Sciences
- University of Melbourne Department of General Practice
- Deakin University School of Education

Reproductive Coercion Research Collaboration

- Griffith University
- University of Queensland
- University of Melbourne
- MSI Australia
- Children by Choice

Other Research partnerships

- Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
- University of Melbourne School of Population Health
- Victoria University





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