

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health:

Strategic Plan 2022-26



Acknowledgment of Country

The Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) is proud to acknowledge that the land on which we work and live always was and always will be Aboriginal land. We pay our respects to traditional owners of country and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their culture, their connection to country, and their ancestors and elders past and present. We also acknowledge that our work follows and learns from a history of strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, who have been leaders in seeking health, justice and an end to ongoing violence and discrimination against their communities.

Commitment to care for the environment

We recognise that our health is influenced by the built and natural environment. With the climate crisis in motion, we will minimise our organisational impact on the environment and explore ways to support environmentally sustainable and regenerating practices. As a for purpose organisation, we will seek to be responsible for the impact we have on the environment and leave the world in a better place than we found it.

Strategy Snapshot

Our strategy on a page is a summary of what we will prioritise and focus on over the coming four years to deliver on our vision.

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**



Introduction

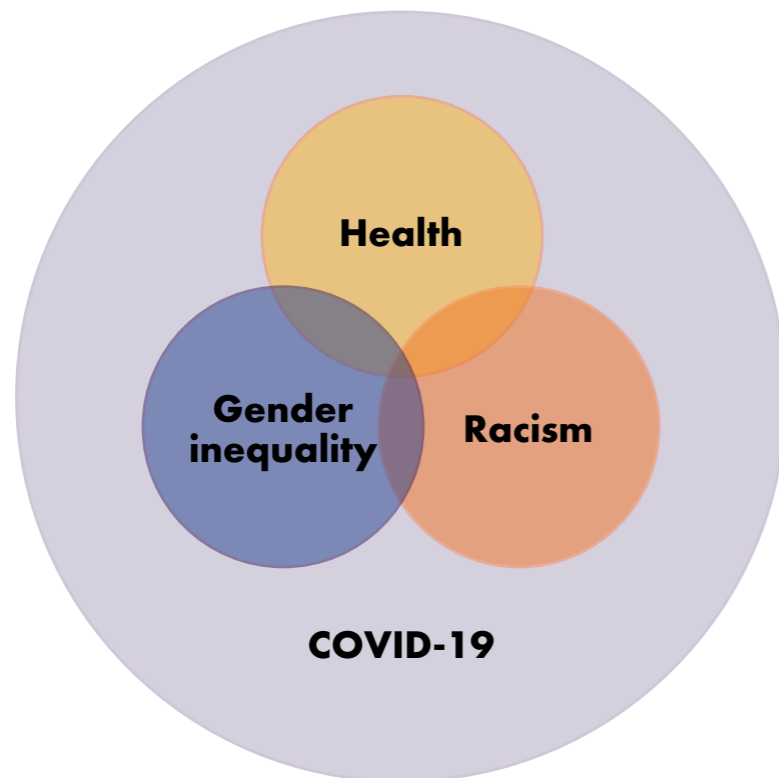
Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) is a national health organisation led by and for migrant and refugee women. Our Strategic Plan 2021-2025 sets out why we exist, for whom, and the positive change we are seeking to achieve. It has been designed to help us focus and prioritise our work to have the greatest possible impact over the four years ahead. We are grateful to the many people who contributed their time, effort and ideas to its development.

Strategic context

The broad context in which we work is at the intersection of three domains: health, gender inequality and racism against migrant communities living in Australia.

These domains continue to be shaped and impacted by global, national and local events, which also inform this Strategy.

Within this broader context, we work to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of all migrant and refugee women living in Australia, recognising that our health, and experiences of health services, are impacted by and intertwined with gender inequality and racism against migrant communities.



Global, national and local events

Racism against migrant communities

There is an increasing body of research demonstrating the damaging impacts of racism on both physical and mental health, and an equally growing acknowledgement of racism and violence against migrant and refugee communities in Australia, at both an interpersonal, institutional and national policy level. Racism and other intersecting forms of discrimination, such as islamophobia, deeply impact migrants and refugees' social and civic participation as well as their access to necessary services, resources and information.

Racial discrimination does not always affect women and men equally or in the same way. As the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination notes

There are circumstances in which racial discrimination only or primarily affects women, or affects women in a different way, or to a different degree than men. Such racial discrimination will often escape detection if there is no explicit recognition or acknowledgement of the different life experiences of women and men, in areas of both public and private life. (General recommendation XXV Gender Related Dimensions of Racial Discrimination, 2000)

Importantly, policy and attitudes relating to migrants is rooted in and shaped by the history of colonisation and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this Country. This context of ongoing colonial violence must inform our advocacy around racism and discrimination. that we do has been shaped by a history of strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, who have been leaders in seeking justice and an end to ongoing violence and discrimination against their communities.

Gender inequality

Gender inequality is harmful to the physical, mental, sexual and reproductive and economic health and wellbeing of all women, men and gender diverse people. It is the primary cause and key driver of violence against women and their children, and has many other damaging short and long-term consequences for their physical and mental health.

Gender inequality drives sex and gender discrimination at work, in the home and in community and is reflected in a persistent gender pay and superannuation gap as well as a higher risk of poverty for women, who face lifelong economic barriers due to unequal, gendered beliefs and attitudes towards paid and unpaid work.

Gender inequality does not affect all women equally or in the same ways. Migrant and refugee women face gender inequality in ways that are inextricably fused with, and often compounded by, racism and gendered racial stereotypes and attitudes. Gender inequality impacts migrant women's health and wellbeing on many levels, including their access to information and services and their opportunities for employment, leadership, and participation in public and social life.

Health and the global COVID-19 pandemic

Since March 2020, the impacts and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic have deeply impacted health and wellbeing in Australia. Globally, the virus has led to millions of infections, deaths and long-term health conditions. Preventative measures and restrictions have also significantly impacted physical and mental health, due to prolonged social isolation, financial stress, family violence, anxiety and mental illness, as well as delays to health checks, elective surgeries and other health education and care. In addition, the ongoing strain on the health care system has led to an exhausted workforce, and put many health practitioners, carers, cleaners and other essential workers at higher risk of infection.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected migrant and refugee women and their families. They have been hardest hit by job and income losses, while shouldering the greatest share of caring, household and family responsibilities. Migrant and refugee women in paid employment, disproportionately occupy roles in essential services, putting them at greater risk of COVID-19 infection, while also being less able to access government support or health information. As a group who already experience significant isolation, migrant and refugee women have also been cut off from key social networks, restricted from overseas travel, and in many cases are grieving and fearing for loved ones and events overseas.



Our Strategic Plan

Our vision

Our vision describes the world we want to live in. It is the ultimate impact for which we strive: our long-term aspiration. It is a vision for health, equity and full participation in society for migrant and refugee women.

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

Our purpose

Our purpose describes how we will contribute to our vision of the future. Our purpose involves leading, educating and motivating people at all levels of society, to advance migrant and refugee women's health, wellbeing and safety in Australia.

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

Our impact areas

Our impact areas highlight key priorities in our work over the next four years.

We know there are many current issues that impact migrant and refugee women's health. To use our resources effectively and have the greatest possible impact, we will focus on five key areas over the next four years.

- Advancing sexual and reproductive rights
- Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Preventing violence against women and children
- Enhancing workplace health and wellbeing
- Supporting COVID-19 recovery

Advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights

Migrant and refugee women face additional barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare and exercising their sexual and reproductive health rights than Australian-born women. These barriers include a lack of information provided in languages other than English, prohibitive costs and residency conditions, stigma and discrimination both within and imposed on communities, and a lack of culturally appropriate service provision.

Improving mental health and wellbeing

Mental health and wellbeing challenges significantly impact individuals and communities across Australia, further exacerbated by stress and social isolation driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. Migrant and refugee women face many of the same challenges and access barriers to their mental health and wellbeing as their sexual and reproductive health. Multilingual mental health resources, culturally appropriate and trauma-informed service provision, and initiatives to address stigma and discrimination are needed.

Preventing violence against women and children

Violence against women is a serious and pervasive problem in Australia. Research shows that migrant and refugee women's experiences of violence are impacted by their immigration context, financial status, family and community networks, and their geographical location. Migrant and refugee women may experience different forms of violence, violence that is more prolonged and severe, and face additional barriers to accessing support services.

Enhancing workplace health and wellbeing

In past decades, many changes have occurred to address gendered inequality and improve women's rights to health and wellbeing in workplace settings. However, migrant and refugee women continue to disproportionately face discrimination at work, which is often due to immigration and visa hurdles, poor working conditions, and exploitation. In addition, barriers to participation often make it challenging for migrant and refugee women to become leaders and decision makers in their organisations.

Supporting COVID-19 recovery

Migrant and refugee women have always experienced challenges related to social isolation, mental health support, family violence, education and employment, as well as barriers to accessing health and violence support services. COVID-19 has exacerbated these challenges and barriers. Providing migrant and refugee women with tailored, accessible and culturally appropriate prevention, treatment and vaccination information and services will be key in supporting recovery across Australia.

Our impact goals

Our impact goals express how we will contribute in our impact areas. Our role is multifaceted and includes engagement with our communities, partners and the broader health sector.

Empower

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

We will ensure that migrant and refugee women have the tools, resources and information they need to make informed choices about their health, wellbeing and safety, understand their health rights, build their health literacy, and know what services are available to them. We will use new technologies to expand our reach and will provide programs that are accessible, appropriate, and tailored to a broad diversity of migrant and refugee women.

To achieve this, we will:

- Provide accurate, tailored and timely health education, leadership programs, and resources to migrant and refugee women, prioritising groups who need it most, including women with disabilities, LGBTIQ communities and women with low incomes and insecure residency.
- Further embed inclusive, intersectional and feminist approaches and messages into our projects and programs, session planning and safety procedures to increase access for women with disabilities, LGBTIQ communities and women with low incomes and/or insecure residency.
- Build on what we have learned delivering health education virtually during COVID-19 by adapting our programs and expanding our use of technology to reach new audiences through different mediums and formats.

We will track and assess our performance through the following indicators:

- Number and demographics of migrant and refugee women who attend our programs or access our resources.
- Number of partnerships which broaden our impact in health literacy and health education for migrant and refugee women.
- Feedback received from women who use our services or programs.
- Changes reported by participants of health education and leadership programs we facilitate.

Transform

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

We will continue to build and promote the evidence base to demonstrate the needs and experiences of migrant and refugee women, and the solutions needed for effective improvement in health outcomes. We will continue to use our evidence base to transform attitudes, practice, policies and systems. We will identify existing and emerging trends, gaps and opportunities for advancing migrant and refugee women's health, wellbeing and safety.

To achieve this, we will:

- Build on and promote the evidence base for migrant and refugee women's health and wellbeing (in the changed context/climate) and seek to address gaps in knowledge through research partnerships.
- Engage and support women from migrant and refugee backgrounds and others to be spokespeople, influencers and champions for migrant and refugee women's health and wellbeing, the work we do and the issues we address.
- Continue to advocate, build and broaden our relationship with government, decision makers, researchers and other stakeholders, to enact policy change that enhances migrant and refugee women's health rights and opportunities.
- Enhance migrant and refugee women's health, rights and opportunities through effective engagement with stakeholders.

We will track and assess our performance through the following indicators:

- Number of research papers we publish specific to our impact areas
- Number of times we are invited to speak at various forums on the results of our research
- Number of women from migrant and refugee backgrounds participating in our programs who become spokespeople, influencers or champions for our impact areas
- Number of government panels, sector committees and official forums we sit on and participate in
- Evidence that our advocacy with government and decision makers results in issues relevant to migrant to refugee women's health rights and opportunities being acknowledged and addressed in new state and federal government policies, plans and programs

Collaborate

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

We will draw on the evidence base as well as our experience and expertise to transform workplaces and health services to be inclusive of migrant and refugee women. By working in partnership, we will build capability so that services, information and workplaces are accessible, relevant, culturally safe and high quality for migrant and refugee women.

To achieve this, we will:

- Define and develop a process for partnership and collaboration in order to increase our impact within our key areas, and offer the greatest benefit to migrant and refugee women.
- Develop partnerships with organisations that have specialist knowledge, including knowledge of disability, LGBTIQ+, young people and seniors' rights, to further our understanding and deliver tailored programs for migrant and refugee women.
- Develop and implement a membership strategy to re-invigorate and increase our membership base within Victoria and across the country.

We will track and assess our performance through the following indicators:

- Number of healthcare providers, employers and managers who have participated in our training programs
- Evidence of improvement in the services provided to migrant and refugee women from healthcare providers, employers and managers who have participated in our training programs
- Number of specialist organisations we partner with on projects
- Number of women from migrant and refugee backgrounds associated with specialist organisations that we reach with our tailored programs
- Increase in the number of engaged MCWH members



Our organisational goals

We need to ensure that both our financial position and workforce is healthy and sustainable to have the greatest possible impact. As such, we have identified two internal goals that will support us to deliver on our vision, purpose, impact areas and roles.

Sustainability for our team and organisation

Our people are our greatest asset. To support them, we must not only maintain a strong organisational culture that nurtures our workforce, but also have the financial ability to support this culture. To be financially resilient, we will implement strategies to diversify our revenue sources for long term-sustainability.

To achieve this, we will:

- Review our operating model to determine whether we have an optimal workforce structure, processes, and technology to support our ongoing growth.
- Continue to be an employer of choice for migrant and refugee women by formalising processes for staff recognition, succession planning and professional development to attract and retain our unique, talented and committed workforce.
- Stabilise, increase and diversify our revenue by implementing our Business Development Strategy, including expansion of Fee For Service delivery.
- Streamline our monitoring and evaluating processes for impact reporting.

We will track and assess our performance through the following indicators:

- Level of engagement and satisfaction of our staff
- Number of new Fee for Services clients
- Number of Fee For Service clients that return and/or refer
- Annual increases in MCWH financial reserves
- Annual increases in the proportion of non-government funded revenue to total revenue
- Advocacy activities informed by impact data from our programs

National influence and leadership

We are a unique and strong voice for migrant and refugee women's health, wellbeing, and safety. Through our influence, we are committed to elevating the voices of the migrant women and communities we serve, profiling the work of our partners and sharing the outcomes of our work nationally. Over the next four years, we will increase our national influence by building partnerships, building capacity, delivering service, and conducting research and advocacy at a national level to create systemic change.

To achieve this, we will:

- Explore extension of our on-the-ground service delivery outside of Victoria.
- Build on and promote our projects and programs to increase our reach nationally.
- Strengthen our national network and reach by forging new connections with migrant and refugee women, bilingual education and health organisations across Australia to advance migrant and refugee women's health and wellbeing.
- Review and update our organisational values, language and policies to reflect our changing/new understandings of gender, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Implement a Reconciliation Action Plan.

We will track and assess our performance through the following indicators:

- A signature MCWH program is funded by federal government for expansion to other states
- Number of national enquiries (media, government, partners etc) seeking our advice and expertise on topics relating to migrant women's health, wellbeing and safety
- Number of funding programs we are successful in (national and state) both alone and through partnership
- Increase in awareness of our brand and work within Victoria and nationally



Our Approach

Our approach is a set of shared principles that underpins how we work with each other, our partners and our communities.

Intersectional

An intersectional and feminist approach means seeing the many ways women's lives, health and decisions are impacted by overlapping social and institutional forces.

Migrant-women led

Since 1978, we have worked for the recognition of migrant and refugee women as leaders, experts, agents for change, decision makers and active participants in their health and well-being.

Evidence-based

Building a clearly communicated evidence-base and dispelling assumptions around migrant women's health is central to increasing all women's opportunities for better health and equitable access to services.

Collaborative

Together we are stronger. Building relationships with partner organisations adds value to existing work and opens more doors to health for migrant women.

Glossary

Equality - the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities. In practice, this means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities.

Equity - recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources, initiatives, responses and opportunities needed to reach a fair outcome.

Feminist - the belief in full social, economic, and political equality for women.

Intersectionality - the complex way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism and classism) combine, overlap or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups.

Intersectional feminism - the understanding of how women's overlapping identities — including race, class, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation — impact the way they experience oppression and discrimination.

Concluding remarks

This Strategy captures our commitment to the health, wellbeing and safety of migrant and refugee women. It is not just words on a page. We will translate this Strategy into meaningful action that drives positive change for, by and with migrant and refugee women.



Contact us

If you have any questions about this Strategy or the work we do, we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch through the following contact details:

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