

SAFER: Successful and Family-Oriented, Enculturated Responses for New and Emerging Multicultural Communities in Regional Victoria

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Interactive Report

Integrated services for women affected by family violence from new and emerging multicultural communities in rural and regional Victoria

Women from new and emerging multicultural communities in regional Victoria face higher risks of family violence due to experiences of racism, migration stress, language barriers, isolation, and limited culturally appropriate support. These challenges are intensified by service gaps and remoteness in regional areas.

This interactive report shares insights from a four-phase research project to help develop a culturally responsive and integrated practice framework for family violence services in regional settings.

Key Findings

- Current service responses are insufficiently culturally safe or accessible.
- Trust in formal systems remains low due to previous negative experiences and structural barriers.
- Bicultural and multilingual workers are essential to service access but require greater systemic support.
- Community and faith-based leaders are often the first point of contact but remain under-recognised by formal services.
- Integrated, coordinated, and locally embedded responses are critical to improving outcomes.

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Project Information



The importance of a culturally relevant, integrated response to address family violence

Inclusive, trauma-informed, and culturally safe support is vital for all, regardless of background. The findings of this project offer practical insights to guide improved service design, policy, and practice across regional Victoria's family violence system.

The SAFER Project aimed to...

- Understand what supports safety and recovery for women from new and emerging multicultural communities, from both lived experience and service provider perspectives.
- Examine the role of multicultural, specialist, and faith-based organisations in family violence responses, including key barriers and referral pathways.
- Develop practical recommendations to strengthen culturally responsive, integrated support in regional areas.

Data for the SAFER Project were collected in four phases across Geelong and Gippsland, regions with growing new and emerging multicultural communities.

- **Phase One – Practitioner Consultation:** Surveys and focus groups with regional family violence and multicultural practitioners.
- **Phase Two – Lived Experience Insights:** In-depth interviews with women from new and emerging multicultural communities.
- **Phase Three – Community and Faith-Based Leaders:** Focus groups with leaders from cultural and religious communities
- **Phase Four – Synthesis and Consensus:** Participants from previous phases to refine and validate a set of draft recommendations.

The SAFER Project acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of all our lands and waterways. We pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging as well as the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which we learn, live, and carry out our work. We support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' calls for self-determination, and a 'Voice, Treaty and Truth Telling' through the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The SAFER Project acknowledges the important contributions of people with a lived experience in all aspects of research, practice, advocacy and policy. We recognise their contribution to further the understanding of our work and that we would not have a thorough understanding of the application of our research to the community.

Findings and Next Steps

Best Practice Framework for Supporting Multicultural Women Experiencing Family Violence



Inclusive, culturally responsive services are crucial to protect multicultural victim-survivors facing unique risks. This project developed a set of recommendations to improve family violence services in regional Victoria.

Victim-Survivors

Women faced cultural stigma, fear, and visa-related uncertainty, often relying on informal networks due to mistrust or inaccessibility of formal services.

Practitioners

Service providers reported systemic barriers, resource constraints, and limitations in MARAM, but found success through bicultural staff, collaboration, and outreach.

Community and Faith-Based Leaders

Leaders often serve as key informal supports but highlighted community barriers like stigma and fear, calling for culturally safe models and greater support for their roles.

Next Steps...

Implementing these recommendations will require ongoing collaboration, strong leadership, targeted funding, and region-specific approaches to ensure safe, effective, and equitable family violence services across Victoria.

Recommendations

These 16 recommendations highlight key strategies for improving culturally relevant, integrated family violence services for multicultural communities in regional and rural areas.

1. **Strengthen Cultural Safety and Responsiveness in Services**
2. **Enhance Outreach and Early Engagement Strategies**
3. **Adapt MARAM to Better Capture Multicultural Survivor Experiences**
4. **Strengthen Legal and Justice System Responses**
5. **Address Structural Barriers (Visa, Housing, Economic Stability)**
6. **Expand Community-Based and Informal Support Networks**
7. **Strengthen Regional and Remote Service Capacity**
8. **Expand Culturally Responsive Mental Health and Wellbeing Support**

9. **Improve Collaboration Between Services to Strengthen the Response**
10. **Strengthen Prevention and Early Intervention Efforts**
11. **Deliver Integrated, Wraparound Responses to Victim-Survivors**
12. **Prioritise Linguistic Access and Cultural Identity in All Service Layers**
13. **Support Children and Parenting in Family Violence Contexts**
14. **Build Trust and Confidentiality in Tight-Knit Communities**
15. **Support and Resource Community Leaders in Informal Support Roles**
16. **Improve Timing and Continuity of Engagement**



Where to Get Help

If you or someone you know is in need of help, there are services you can contact for support.

If in an emergency, call 000.

National Services

- **1800RESPECT:** 24/7 support for family violence and sexual assault. ☎ 1800 737 732; Chat:

<https://www.1800respect.org.au/online-chat-1800respect>

- **Lifeline:** 24/7 crisis and suicide support. ☎ 13 11 14
- **Beyond Blue:** Mental health support. ☎ 1300 224 636
- **Kids Helpline:** Counselling for young people aged 5–25. ☎ 1800 55 1800
- **113YARN:** 24/7 crisis line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. ☎ 13 92 76

Victorian State-Wide

- **Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre:** 24/7 crisis support and accommodation. ☎ 1800 015 188
- **Sexual Assault Crisis Line:** After-hours support. ☎ 1800 806 292
- **Child Protection:** Report concerns for child safety. ☎ 1300 655 795 (BH) / 13 12 78 (AH)
- **Mental Health Triage Service:** Crisis mental health support. ☎ 1300 363 322
- **113YARN:** 24/7 crisis line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. ☎ 13 92 76
- **Dardi Munwurro – Brother to Brother:** Support line for Aboriginal men. ☎ 1800 435 799
- **Men's Referral Line:** Support for men using violence. ☎ 1300 766 491



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