



## **DOMESTIC, FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND WOMEN FROM OTHER CULTURES (CALD WOMEN)**

We take for granted how much freedom and power we are given by being familiar with our culture and being able to speak the common language. Women from other cultures who live in our community are extremely vulnerable to violence and often less equipped to manage their circumstances when they need help. This group of women are known as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse or CALD.

This term is used to describe people who come from different countries, have different ethnicities, culture and religion. English is often not their first language and they all have very different reasons for coming to live in Australia. Culture is extremely important as it is the foundation to how we think, behave and navigate our daily life.

Some important points to note are:

- Australia defines people from CALD communities as people who are not from the 'main English-speaking countries'. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), these are Canada, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) and the United States of America. The ABS also states (2007), that 31% of Australians were born overseas and, of these, about two-thirds were born in non-English speaking countries.<sup>1</sup>
- The main barriers to support for CALD women are language, discrimination, issues around settlement and immigration, pre-migration history of torture and trauma, lack of family and community support, fear of authorities, as well as a lack of understanding of systems and laws that can provide support and protection.<sup>2</sup>
- People from CALD backgrounds who live in rural, regional or remote areas are more vulnerable because they are isolated and may not have access to the support that meets

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<sup>1</sup> <https://apiar.org.au/?conference-paper=domestic-violence-in-australias-cald-communities-association-between-demographics-of-frontline-workers-and-selected-therapeutic-approaches>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.1800respect.org.au/inclusive-practice/cald/>

their needs. For example, there may not be interpreters available in their town, or people locally who can recognise and understand their religious beliefs.

- Evidence about how domestic, family and sexual violence is affecting women in CALD communities is not freely available as there is no reliable data available that gives a clear picture of what's going on.<sup>3</sup>
- CALD women are often living far from home and away from their families. Many are dependent on their partners or support person for financial support, communication and transport. Social isolation is a common form of abuse experienced by these women.
- Many women come to Australia for marriage to a local man and the prospect of a better life than what they had in their home country. This can create a sense of belonging as a possession and normalise abuse in the household. The perception that yelling and sexual abuse are part of being married means women are far less likely to recognise the behaviour as abuse and therefore report it as such.<sup>4</sup>
- Language barriers, a lack of familiarity with the Australian legal system and a fear of authority due to experiences in their home countries can also prevent women from achieving the justice and protection they need and deserve.

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<sup>3</sup> Cathy Vaughan et al, 'Promoting Community-led Responses to Violence Against Immigrant and Refugee Women in Metropolitan and Regional Australia: The ASPIRE Project' (Landscapes: State of Knowledge No 12, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, October 2015) 6; Department of Social Services (Cth), 'Hearing Her Voice: Report from the Kitchen Table Conversations with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women on Violence Against Women and Their Children' (September 2015) 9

<sup>4</sup> InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, 'I lived in fear because I knew nothing: Barriers to the Justice System Faced by CALD Women Experiencing Family Violence' (2010) 15.