



Multicultural Framework Review Submission by the Action Research Centre Ltd (ARC) and Centre for Migrant and Refugee Health (CMRH) to the Australian Multicultural Framework Review Panel 2023.

13 October 2023.

**The Chair of the Multicultural Framework Review Panel,
Department of Home Affairs.
Canberra.**

Dr Bulent Hass Dellal AO,

In response to the invitation from the Multicultural Framework Review Panel and the Reference Group, we are pleased to make this submission to the Panel.

Identity of the Submitters

Action Research Centre Ltd (ARC)

ARC Ltd is a registered charity that combines research and advocacy in the areas of family violence, asylum seeker needs and mental health to eliminate marginalisation. Through our strategic partnerships with other sector experts, we dedicate our work to evidence-based and critical reflection to facilitate policy dialogue and social change. For more information on ARC, please visit [Action Research Centre](https://www.actionresearchcentre.org.au).

The Centre for Migrant and Refugee Health (CMRH)

The Centre for Migrant and Refugee Health (CMRH) works with migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community backgrounds in Victoria, Australia with a public health leadership focus to promote and improve mental health and well-being. Hence, achieving better mental health outcomes and good quality of life.

We achieve our work by providing integrated mental health services, both clinical and practical solutions, including the promotion of physical, social, and mental health and well-being in partnership with existing health service providers in Australia. More information about CMRH is available here [Home - Centre For Migrant and Refugee Health \(cmrh.org.au\)](https://www.cmrh.org.au).

Contacts

Centre for Migrant and Refugee Health | 24 Central Parkway, Caroline Springs Vic 3023 | M: 0432 515 447 | 03 8382 2125 | E: mabor@cmrh.org.au | E: info@cmrh.org.au | W: www.cmrh.org.au

Action Research Centre Ltd | 50 Apsley Dr | Mickleham VIC 3064 | Australia | M: [+61 456 629 501](tel:+61456629501) | W: www.actionresearchcentre.org.au E: info@actionresearchcentre.org.au

Both Action Research Centre Ltd and the Centre for Migrant and Refugee Health (CMRH) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2021 to collaborate on projects in areas of mutual interest, for the benefit of the communities we both serve. Together, our work draws on evidence to eliminate marginalisation among less privileged members of the community and promote socio-economic, mental health and wellbeing through activities that address the social determinants of health and contribute broadly to our vision and goals.

Our Interest in this Multicultural Framework Review

We are interested in this review as organisations wholly dedicated to promoting the health and wellbeing of members of multicultural communities, including developing credible evidence to inform policy dialogue and advocacy. Similarly, more than 80% of our combined staff identify as members of Australia's multicultural communities. In addition, this review will contribute to the achievement of our goals and strategic objectives.

How We have Contributed to Multicultural life in Australia

- **Creating Access to Mental Health Education and Promotion:** CMRH engages in public education and awareness campaigns to educate individuals and communities about healthy lifestyles, mental illness prevention, and the importance of regular self-review. Through this strategy, the centre offers resources and programs to encourage healthier behaviours.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Support:** The CMRH focuses on mental health offering counselling, therapy, psychotherapy, and support services to individuals facing mental health challenges. We aim to reduce stigma, raise awareness, and provide resources for those in need.
- The CMRH has been a member of Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia (FECCA), Victorian Multicultural Council (VMC) and Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) for some time now promoting multiculturalism in Australia through advocacy, policy support and research.
- ARC contributed to a symposium **focusing on reducing the incidence of family violence within culturally diverse communities under the guise of religion**. During the symposium organised by the University of Adelaide in 2022, ARC's CEO contributed to one of the parallel sessions and made recommendations on the theme of the symposium.
- ARC has recently **completed five projects focused on developing evidence to understand the overall extent of family violence in Australia and among the CALD population, and how to eliminate family violence through policy dialogue, advocacy, and culturally appropriate services**.
- ARC is completing a project to **deconstruct negative public perceptions of the mental health of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women through digital stories**. The project promotes the **development of a good and personalised mental health management plan** for women.

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- Over the past three years, ARC has **hosted four high-level public research presentations and discussions on key research findings with eminent industry experts and policy makers.** The fourth in the series was a symposium with panellists including the Victorian Survival Advocacy Council (VSAC), former Victorian Chief Health Officer, Prof Brett Sutton, and CEO of the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, Dr Adele Murdolo, among other dignitaries.

Our Recommendations

Based on our work with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations in Australia, we suggest the following as elements that could be promoted to contribute to a multicultural framework.

1. *We propose an asset-based approach to community development that highlights the unique gifts, skills, and abilities of migrant community members to be well integrated into the Australian social structure and multicultural framework.* Asset-based approaches (also known as ABCD) recognise everyone as a human being with unique contributions to make to community development. This recommendation is supported by evidence from our work (Lester, Ryakhovskaya & Olorunnisola, 2023) as a research and community-led organisation engaged in policy dialogue and advocacy on issues affecting multicultural communities across Australia.

The rhetoric around welcoming the cross section of the immigrant population cohort, such as refugees and asylum seekers, is mostly media-driven, negative, and abrasive, with devastating consequences for multiculturalism and the overall social determinants of health in Australia. In this context, a critical factor that will enhance true multiculturalism in Australia is the recognition that every Australian can help to uncover and re-emphasise the unique contributions of members of migrant communities.

2. *We also propose the promotion of social determinants of health (SDH) through an evidence-based approach that addresses the social and economic wellbeing of migrant communities.* In this submission, we argue that such an evidence-based approach should be directed towards understanding culturally appropriate services that address the mental health and socio-economic wellbeing of members of migrant communities. In one of our recent research projects on this topic, our findings led us to conclude that:

Service providers need to be aware of and incorporate culturally appropriate programs in the areas of mental health assessment and intervention, education, and employment. A trauma-informed approach should be used when dealing with refugee groups and other groups who have faced hardships. Government policy should focus on improving community engagement to create and strengthen social networks, which are vital in boosting integration into the

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community and increasing health education and access to services. Government should focus on asset-based approaches in designing education and employment integration programs to promote social belonging and community engagement, and thus, community resilience, which will consequently have beneficial individual and group outcomes (Lester, Ryakhovskaya & Olorunnisola, 2023, p. 17).

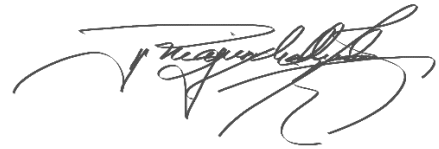
We opine that our submission, if carefully considered, has the potential to promote the inclusion and integration of migrant communities and thereby indorse multiculturalism in Australia. Similarly, it will enhance the resilience of culturally diverse communities and a greater sense of cohesion.

We are open to further discussion with the Review Panel on the issues raised in this submission.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Titus S. Olorunnisola
CEO Action Research Centre Ltd



Mr Mabor Chadhuol
Executive Director & Founder CMRH



Ms Maureen Hegarty
Chairperson, Action Research Centre Ltd



Ms Monica Majak
Chairperson, CMRH

Reference

Lester, H., Ryakhovskaya, Y. & Olorunnisola, T.S. (2023). "Asset-based Community Development Approaches to Resilience among Refugees and Recent Migrant Communities in Australia: A Scoping Review. *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care*. Pp.1-20.

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